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ECHOES

justice, peace and creation news

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FEATURING

OVERCOMING VIOLENCE

Echoes From Elsewhere

An Introduction To Echoes Magazine In Reactions, Facts and Issues From All Over The World

On the appropriation of genetic resources...

For patenting kava (Piper mythesticum), a well-known and economically and culturally important cultivar from the Pacific, L'Oreal's patent (US #5,585,386) claims the use of juice squeezed from the plant for the treatment of hair loss and baldness. The company has also made its claims in the UK, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Poland, Hungary, Japan, Canada and China.

Kava is the source of a mildly intoxicating ceremonial beverage of the same name popular across the Pacific. Grown for centuries across the Pacific, kava's greatest genetic diversity is found in Fiji and Vanuatu, where over 100 varieties have been developed by farmers.

L'Oreal is a global giant with US$ 10 billion a year in sales in the personal care market, dwarfing most Pacific economies. The company is 49% owned by Switzerland's Nestle (the world's largest food and drink company with US$ 44 billion in sales in 1996). The remaining 51% is held by "France's richest woman", whose personal fortune is estimated to be Ffr. 40 billion.

According to a US drug company, kava products "could move into the mainstream of consumption by today's baby-boom generation". But as L'Oreal, and other personal care and pharmaceutical companies, stake intellectual property claims on kava and its uses, the Pacific farmers who domesticated, develop and grow kava, stand to gain little from the commercial interest. In fact, kava experts in Pacific countries even report recent requests for germplasm from North countries interested in large-scale kava monoculture.

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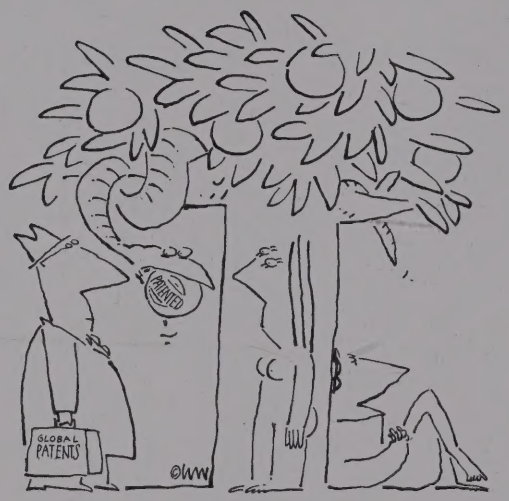

Len Munnik

EU, US, and Japan push "global" patents for big corporations

Farmers' organisations and civil society organisations (CSOs) spent the early part of this month thinking about Farmer's Rights and the revision of the Undertaking. But US, Japanese and European patent office officials spent time working on a new global patent system that will likely facilitate the continued undermining of Farmer's Rights.

Patent office heads met November 13 and 14, 1997, in Kyoto, Japan, to work on a system where, "patent recognition in a single country will be enough to confer worldwide patent rights". They plan to start experimenting with the new system in 1998 by jointly examining applications from big companies.

The patent offices want to save companies — and themselves — the trouble of having to process applications and seek approval in each country (or, in some cases, region) where they want a monopoly. "And in the process" says Vandana Shiva of India's Research Foundation, "make it easier for biopirates to monopolise traditional knowledge. And do it globally. Imagine if the so-called inventors of the US patent on turmeric had been granted a world claim along with their US monopoly!"

"Definitely another reason to reject the European based Intermediate Technology Development Group, we need to think this one through before rushing to approve more life patenting in Europe. Are the "gringos" going to use this to impose their wacky notions of patentability on us?"

According to CONTAG's Adriano Soares, such a system might be "a Trojan horse for the imposition of US patent standards — if you can really call them standards — on the South". Even if the system was only initially applied in the North, "It probably wouldn't be long before the US started knocking on our door insisting that the only way to comply with trade agreements is to accept the policies of the US patent office implemented through global patents."

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Editorial

Echoes
justice, peace and creation news

Echoes is an occasional publication of the World Council of Churches' Programme Unit III on Justice, Peace and Creation.
It is intended to share information and insights on the concern of the Unit.
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"I came to the conclusion that I wouldn't stand impotence...

"Social tensions and violence would only end if people were able to work together with the same aims. People would have to become aware that everybody should do their bit to favour peace...

"People responsible for these programmes believe that giving youth the possibility of getting employed helps them to get out of the influence of the gangs and the trafficking in the shanty towns. But still, there is a lot more to do in order to reach many more young people and to overcome the social tensions that create violence...

"There is a need to show people that peace can be found. But people must be brought together so that they can be energised for peace...

"Living in constant tension because of violence has made many people lose their energy to become involved in peace issues. In order to lift up people, it is important to bring them together, to network, so that they can share their ideas, their daily lives, their perspectives and feed each other with hope...

"Compromise is essential. Commitment needs to acknowledge "the wrongs committed by both sides", "the corrosive lack of trust" people have in each other, the need for healing, the need to resolve issues of justice and the need to build a genuine peace process, involving everybody, and served by inclusive negotiation...

"Building peace requires foundations and it must involve everyone. We need to seek inclusiveness, even at a theological level. We need a theology of embrace that may help us to overcome exclusion. Peacemaking takes time, and we mustn't feel dismayed...

"We reject the logic of peace through war. Instead we say "don't wage war on our behalf"...

"Give a hand to peace, peace for children. War will not win peace and bullets don't give a people's mandate...

"Where peacemaking has been most successful, there has been much communication, collaboration and lobbying between different levels and sectors...

"Our first priority was to get over ethnic divisions. Then, we could begin looking at the nation as a whole. It was important to expose leaders to the different ideas and to the fact that power-sharing could be viable...

"As people of faith, and leaders in the faith community, we are uniquely qualified, and uniquely obliged to launch this global transformation...

"Congregations must move out of the four walls of their sanctuaries. Transforming means turning apathy into activism — practising "foot theology" by placing their feet where their theologies lie. There are those who will hear this, and it will resonate with their spirit, but will have a nagging question... and that is, how will they overcome the overwhelming fear that grips them?...

A Global Campaign for Peace: A Movement for the 21st Century

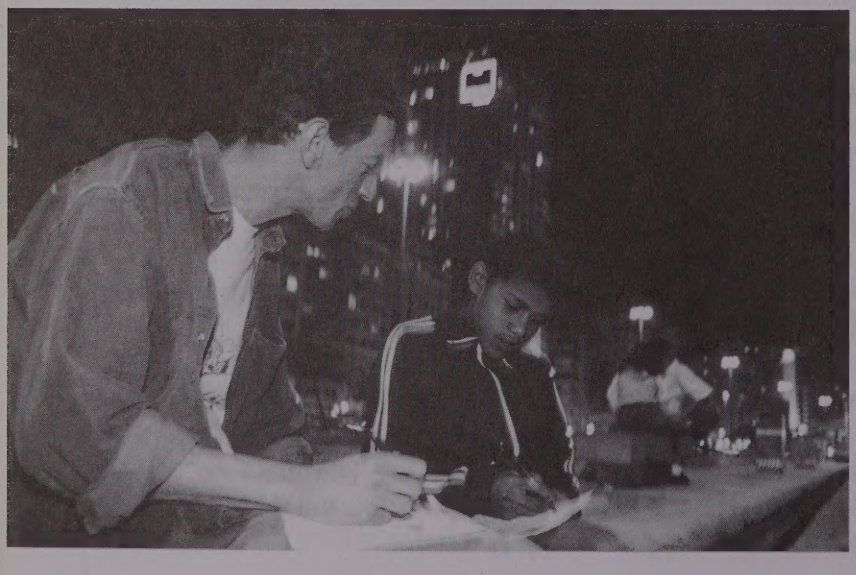
By Salpy Eskidjian

Rio de Janeiro, the "Marvelous City" as the Cariocas call it, April 1996, a month after the city was dressed in bright colours and moving to the rhythms of samba, a time when the gaps and social divisions in the city became narrower; a space where the asphalt neighbourhoods and the slums came together. In that warm month in the Southern Hemisphere, a small group of creative and committed people involved in issues of peace-building, human rights, security, law, theology and politics gathered with a mandate from the WCC Central Committee "to give further shape" to the newly-established Programme to Overcome Violence.

The Central Committee meeting of September 1995 had affirmed that the focus of the programme they had created in 1994 should be *"building a culture of peace through practical means to overcome violence at different levels of society, and encouraging the churches to play a leading role in using non-violent means such as prevention, mediation, intervention and education to overcome violence in their particular contexts"*. The Central Committee also called for stories from different regions about the experiences of churches and groups in overcoming violence.

In Rio de Janeiro NGOS have found that the opportunity to learn a skill is an important ingredient for a better future.

Photo: Peter Williams/WCC



Resolutions and Reality

Since the WCC's beginnings in 1948 there have been a multitude of important resolutions from its governing bodies with regard to questions of violence, non-violence, transformation of conflicts and dialogue. Many consultations and workshops have been held and a wealth of material and studies are available. Affirmations had been made, commitments signed. How were we to continue, to build on the existing work in order "to overcome the spirit, logic and practice of war" (WCC Central Committee 1994)?

International Affairs of WCC was given the task, in the light of previous work on this question, to draft the working principles and assumptions for the programme. Churches, groups and movements were asked to help the WCC define how best it could support those who were promoting a culture of peace. One of the messages we constantly received was for the WCC to recognise the work that had been going on all over the world, especially at the grassroots, to overcome violence; to help lift them up, network with them and learn from their methodologies.

The "Rio group", as we called ourselves, could not have asked for more dynamic hosts in a city where violence is a daily reality and yet which contains unbelievable creativity in trying to overcome it. While the surroundings were beautiful and inspiring and the meetings organised and fruitful, what amazed me the most was the effect the venue had on the group and their deliberations.

The working groups met at the Factory of Hope, located in the Acarí slum. That morning a two-year-old child from Acarí was killed as a result of a senseless shoot-out between the police and a gang. There

was immense tension in the air. During our lunch break we had the opportunity to tour the factory, talk to young adults from the slums who were learning a skill and clinging to a hope for a better future. We listened to a charismatic preacher who has dedicated his life to saving their lives and translating their hope into reality. We learned how different actors in civil society had come together to be concrete witnesses in overcoming the crazy violence in their beautiful city.

Suddenly our statements and resolutions sounded irrelevant and rather pretentious. Neither the WCC nor our Central Committee mandates meant much to them. How could we develop a programme that would be meaningful to the realities of this world? How could we provide the space for these amazing experiences to come together and build alliances and coalitions? Could we strengthen and support those initiatives? Could we listen and learn from them?

One thing was very clear. We could not allow ourselves to give further shape to this programme without taking into account the work of these committed people on the ground — people who struggled daily to cross the barriers between the so-called good and the bad; those who knew that love was the strongest weapon to overcome fear; those who saw a human face, even in the enemy. We had to find a way to discover more such people, listen to their stories, help them tell their story to the rest of the world and let the stories be told over and over again. As Jesus did, we could use real-life parables as examples. All we had to do was stop and look around for those creative initiatives that were confronting the global culture of violence.

With the WCC approaching its 50th anniversary and the third millennium, we would have to "equip our member churches to make a forceful common witness for building a culture of peace" (Rio Consultation Report 1996). Therefore we celebrated when the WCC Central Committee adopted the mid-term focus for the POV, recommended by the Rio Consultation, by calling for a launch of a global campaign called "Peace to the City" as a symbol of "engaging and encouraging all churches in every place to practise peace every day" (WCC Central Committee 1996). The main aim of the campaign would be to focus on imaginative efforts to overcome violence through cross-community work to build bridges and reconcile communities drawn into conflict.

The Challenge from Africa

In 1994 the Programme to Overcome Violence had come about following a call from South Africa, where the ecumenical family had come together for thanksgiving and celebration in 1994. Constitutional

Music and celebration mark the launch of the Peace to the City Campaign, August 31, 1997, in Johannesburg, South Africa. Photo: Roger Wikstrom

apartheid had been overcome; the ecumenical fellowship had spoken out loudly and clearly against racism and had worked together in combatting it. Truly it was a time of praise and prayer, but also a time to look forward. It was the powerful call of Methodist Bishop Stanley Mogoba, during his sermon at the opening worship of the Central Committee meeting, that challenged the WCC to create a programme to overcome violence.

As Bishop Storey from South Africa said later in the deliberations, he welcomed such a programme because

> "not only does it challenge war but it focuses on the meaning of peace with justice. The church has to face such challenges, though it took 18 centuries before it repudiated slavery. Racism was a discovery of the 20th century, and the church had recognised racism and repudiated it. We have not succeeded in eradicating either slavery or racism, but the world is in no doubt as to where the church stands on these issues."

In recalling Bishop Mogoba's challenge, he asked why, having suffered torture and imprisonment and having just ended their struggle for liberation, such a programme was needed? Perhaps it threw a new challenge to the churches to take a clear stance on violence?

We were back in Johannesburg again in August 1997. Stanley Mogoba's successor, Bishop Mvume Dandala, preached at the official launch of the Peace to the City campaign. He saluted the WCC for deciding that "this great programme should be launched from the soil of Africa, and for saying to South Africans — 'Blessed are the peacemakers'." In his passionate sermon Bishop Dandala reminded us that:

> "There is no future for any country that does not deal with the seeds of violence once and for all. The South Africans are saying that violence is a scourge; there is nothing romantic about violence. We have seen it in this continent, lived with it in this continent, seen the sons and

POV Reference Committee members, WCC staff, and local city representatives gathered in Johannesburg, South Africa in August to share and strategize about the Peace to the City Campaign:
(first row, seated, from left to right) Sam Kobia, Sara Speicher, Salpy Eskidjian, Janis Pryor, Randi Donnis, Margot Kässman, Janice Love;
(second row, seated) Rubem César Fernandes, Dafne Sabanes Plou, Donna Pa Rokotuivuna, Doug Baker, Rod Booth;
(standing) Hizkias Assefa, Tyrol Ferdinands, Mike Vorster, Deenabandhu Mano Joseph. Photo: Jeffrey Brown

daughters of this continent being destroyed by violence.... The people who must be in the forefront are the ones who lived with this scourge. Peace comes to those who stand up. The hour is the hour of Africa to say to the world THERE IS ANOTHER WAY. The day is now that we should stand up and say NO to violence. The church of God must stand up with those who are oppressed. We need to stand up for peace. The church of God has been quiet for too long. We need to talk against our own when they choose the way of violence. We can't be prophets of peace and non-violence until we agree to change the culture of violence. Our governments are spending so much to build armies. Who is the army of South Africa going to fight? We are building machines that will turn around to destroy our own children. Those swords should be beaten into ploughshares so that we can have tools to feed the nation. It is said that this century will go down as the most violent century in history. The way to stop the wars is the way Jesus has taught us: to love those who hate us, to feed your enemy, to do good to those who do bad to you. This is the will of God. Let us come in the name of Christ; let us find another way; let us build a new culture, let us learn to honour justice; let us find a way to celebrate peace...."

South Africa gave back this challenge and call to the world community, while accepting the challenge itself. The peace campaign was launched with tremendous enthusiasm. Rev Dr Konrad Raiser, WCC General Secretary, described the Programme to Overcome Violence and the campaign as "one of the most ambitious undertakings of the WCC". The campaign's strength lies in the fact that it has risen from the grassroots in seven cities faced with violence. Seven cities which have given birth to initiatives that are trying to transform it. Seven cities working to build peace with justice. Seven cities which have agreed to share their experiences with people and organisations around the world. ***Peace to the City*** is an effort to respond to the rise of violence — in many forms — around the world.

Cities on a hill

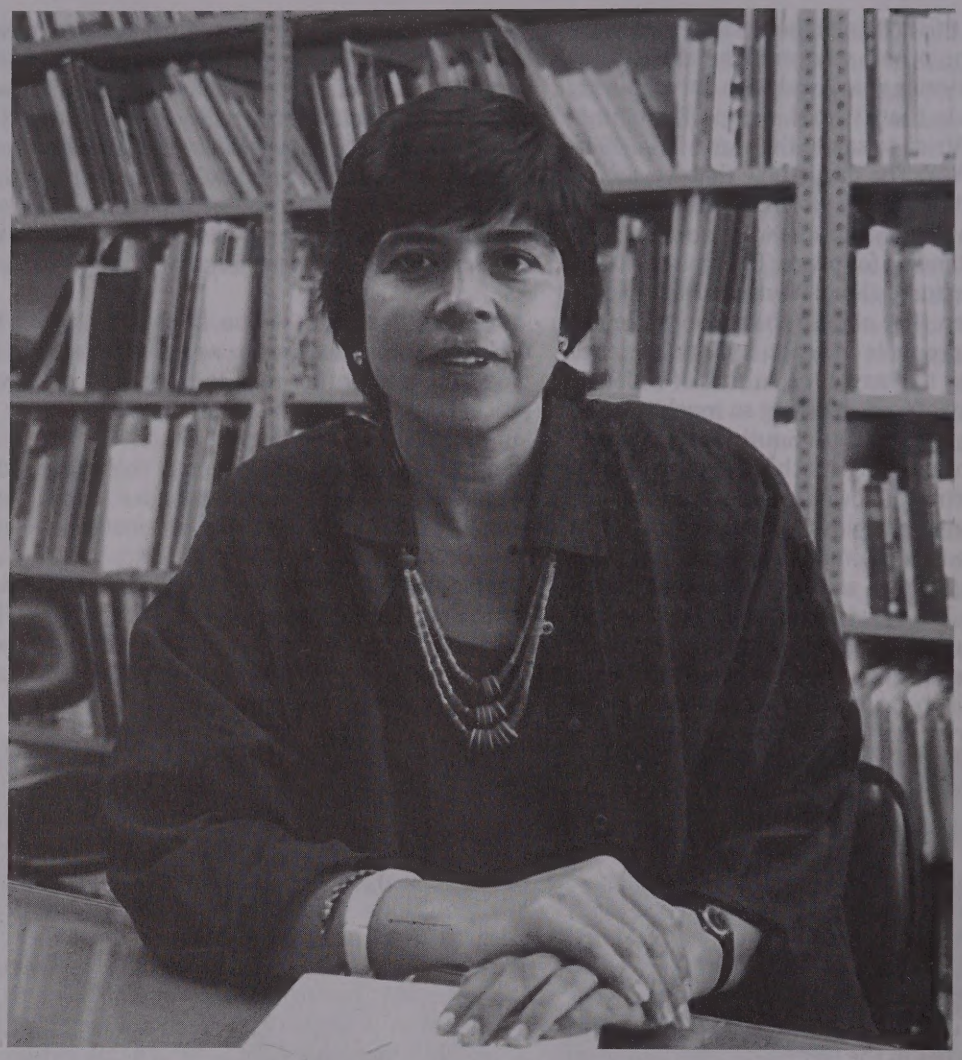
The inspiration of the city as the focus of the campaign comes both from the Bible and from the realities we know in our world. The vision of the holy city is lifted up many times throughout the Bible — a vision of the heavenly Jerusalem that challenges unjust structures, calls for right relations among people, with God and creation, and promises peace in all its fullness. This initiative is immersed in biblical imagery and witness that encourages Christians to resist violence in all its forms. The city is also a microcosm of some of the most destructive forces and some of the most creative initiatives to overcome violence.

The emphasis of the campaign is not on violence but on imaginative models of reconciliation and community rebuilding. To communicate the campaign stories and efforts, traditional print material, personal exchanges, as well as modern means of communication such as videos and the Internet are being used to spread the message, stimulating others to similar initiatives in their context, connecting people and serving as a space for discussion and debate.

Belfast, Boston, Colombo, Durban, Kingston, Rio de Janeiro and Suva are the seven cities around the globe engaged on the road to building a culture of peace. Each one is unique, each provides creative examples of peace-building. Through the campaign they are made visible, the value of their approaches is recognised, their methodologies and lessons learned are synthesised to form new insights and theoretical perspectives. They stimulate sharing and networking and give others hope and the tools to attempt something similar in their own contexts. They are cities "set on a hill" — but they are not the only ones. Your city, your group, your church are also called by God to be set on a hill.

The POV challenges the churches to play a leading role in overcoming violence. The POV as well as the campaign is a broad framework within which the efforts of all can find a place. The churches must take up the challenge. There is a need for courage, for creativity and for action. As our friends from Boston say, we need "to put our feet where our theologies lie". The Christian message of truth-telling, forgiveness, healing, and reconciliation are the underlying themes of this campaign. A small but exciting step. A small but decisive seed of a global peace movement for the 21st century?

Salpy Eskidjian is an Executive Secretary for International Affairs, Unit on Justice, Peace and Creation. She is the WCC staff person responsible for the POV and the coordinator of the Peace to the City campaign. She is an Armenian Orthodox and national of Cyprus.



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The following articles from the seven cities in the Peace to the City Campaign, with the exception of Kingston, were written by Dafne Sabanes Plou, a free-lance journalist from Argentina. She is currently a member of the Methodist Church. President of the Latin American Region of the World Association for Christian Communi-cation, President of the Latin American and Caribbean News Agency and member of the Advisory Group on Communications, WCC.

She is the author of *"Caminos de Unidad"* (CLAI, Quito, 1995) and *"Global communications: is there a place for human dignity?"* (WCC, Risk book series, 1996). Dafne is also writing a book on the Peace to the City Campaign for the WCC Risk Book Series. (see p.50)

Prayers included in each of the articles were shared at the launch of the Peace to the City Campaign in Johannesburg, South Africa, on 31 August 1997.

The big task in Northern Ireland

Belfast: Street scene in West Belfast - © WCC. Peter Williams

"Part of what we are learning in Northern Ireland is that turning cease-fires into a lasting peace is a long and difficult process," said Doug Baker from Mediation Network, an organisation founded in 1991 in Northern Ireland to develop the use of mediation in situations of conflict and to engage in the field of community relations.

Three decades of communal violence have made many people lose hope that peace can ever be built. Many who have been involved in various efforts naturally feel burnt out. At the same time many others are only beginning to look seriously at what is involved in the task of peace-building. "In order to support both of these groups of people, it is important that there should be opportunities to come together, to network, to share ideas, visions and perspectives. To feed each other with hope — and to learn skills to assist with this task," Baker points out.

In thirty years of open communal fighting in Northern Ireland, a period commonly referred to as "the Troubles", over 3,000 people have been killed, thousands have been injured and many more have suffered because they were forced to leave their homes out of fear or intimidation, or were left unemployed in a country divided by ethnic conflict. Violence has also been an obstacle to economic development, and great percentages of the public budget had to be invested in security measures instead of education, health care or adequate social policies.

In a recent document entitled "Pursuing Peace", signed by people involved in business, the voluntary sector and various peace and reconciliation groups, some realities of the Northern Ireland situation which need to be

taken into account in any peace process were articulated. For those who signed the document the impossibility of finding a military solution to the conflict is one of those realities. The solution, they believe, has to be found in the political arena. They also believe compromise is essential and that any lasting peace will require people to acknowledge "the wrongs committed by both sides", "the corrosive lack of trust" people have in each other, the need for healing, the need to resolve issues of justice, the need for inclusive negotiation and that a genuine peace process will involve everyone and not simply the politicians.

Belfast: a divided city

Belfast, the main city in Northern Ireland, with 300,000 inhabitants, is a divided city. Walls have been built in different sectors of the city — "peace lines" that were meant to stop violence in the neighbourhoods. The majority of people in Belfast live in areas which are at least 90% "Protestant" or 90% "Catholic". This high level of residential segregation reflects strong community identification and affects the social, educational, religious and sometimes working life of many people. It also reflects the fear, distrust and insecurity common to both Protestant and Roman Catholic communities.

But still, in this divided city, considerable efforts are being made to overcome violence and promote peace and dialogue. Some of them are funded by the European Union and the International Fund for Ireland, others by the government's Central Community Relations Unit, and others by international or local NGOs committed to issues of peace and justice. Many grassroots community groups and individuals have also generated peace work, with varying results.

The situation of conflict in Belfast is also reproduced in smaller cities, towns and rural areas. The need to work for peace in the whole country at all levels is a clear challenge.

Mediation as a creative response to conflict

In 1994 the Mediation Network formulated its vision statement, which includes the promotion of "Third-party intervention in disputes and support of creative responses to conflict in the community". Members of this network believe that, in Northern Ireland,

Belfast "Peace Line"

One legacy of centuries of sectarian division and 30 years of communal fighting is that there are 16 walls separating Protestant and Catholic districts in various parts of Belfast. They provide a degree of protection for both sides against attack from extreme elements in the other. Known locally as "Peace Lines", the walls are present because there is no real peace. This aerial view of a "peace line" in East Belfast separating Nationalist and Unionist areas of the city shows how stark the division can be and at the same time the reality that we are neighbors in spite of our differences. One hope of initiatives for peace in Belfast is to open up communication between those divided by this history of fear and violence.

Photo: Frankie Quinn

Forthspring is an exciting venture arising from church and community groups on both sides of the "Peace Line" in West Belfast. Members of the Springfield Road Methodist Church, Cornerstone and Currach (two small ecumenical communities based along the "Peace Line") and the Mid-Springfield Community association have been renovating the Methodist church building on the dividing line between Catholic and Protestant districts. The facility will be used to meet the needs of parents and toddlers, youth and senior citizens, and to serve as a point of contact for both communities. Mediation Network facilitates communication between the four groups as they discern a common vision for peace building in the area and look for creative ways to share responsibility for this new venture. Rev. Gary Mason (Springfield Road Methodist Church) Sister Noreen Christian (Currach Community) and Bridie Cotter (Cornerstone Community) stand in front of the building before renovations began.

society has a conflict culture that encourages violence and, after all these years of confrontation, also a growing awareness of the need to find creative and liberating ways out of violence.

The Mediation Network promotes the idea of peace-building and the development of mutually respectful relationships within and across the divided community. It works with people and communities to improve their relations by assisting them to communicate more effectively. Facilitating communication, improving understanding, supporting creative thinking and exploring accommodation are some of the Mediation Network's main tasks. The methods for mediation can involve face-to-face dialogue (formal mediation), intermediation (when parties meet separately with a third party who facilitates communication) and mediative behaviour (when a third party assists in situations of conflict).

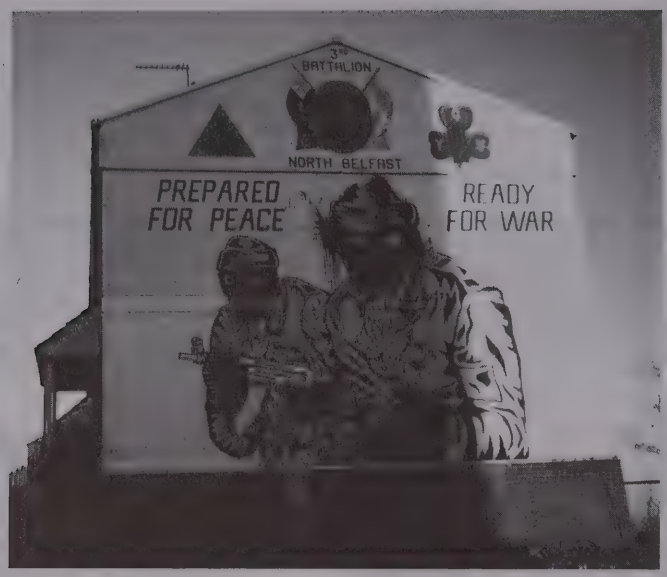
The public and political sectors and the justice system, including police, prison service and prisoners, the churches and the community, are all priority areas of work for the Mediation Network. Training, promotion and facilitation of dialogue and the practice of mediation are its main tasks.

Doug Baker considers that during all these years of work, lots of lessons have been learned. "It is hard work to turn cease-fires into peace," he says. "Building peace requires foundations and it must involve everyone. We need to seek inclusiveness, even at a theological level. We need a theology of embrace that may help us to overcome exclusion. Peacemaking takes time, and we musn't feel dismayed."

The role of the churches and the ecumenical movement

Churches play a vital role in the search for peace in Northern Ireland. Church attendance and church membership in this region are both very high compared to the rest of Europe. There are quite a few congregational peace efforts and many peace groups have been formed in local churches.

Some local Protestant congregations and Catholic parishes have started dialogue and inter-



Murals throughout Belfast graphically present both Unionist and Nationalist viewpoints • Photos: Doug Baker

change groups with considerable success. In Belfast, the Belmont and District Council of Churches has already celebrated its 25th anniversary. Two Presbyterian, two Anglican, one Methodist and one Catholic parish have been working together for peace during all this period.

Other examples are the experiences developed between the Clonard Catholic Church and the Fitzroy Presbyterian Church, in Belfast, and between the Harmony Hill Presbyterian Church and the St. Coleman's Roman Catholic Church, in Lisburn. These congregations have been able to come together for sharing, prayer, and Bible study in their search to understand each other and respect their different religious expressions.

They have also shared in mixed groups their feelings about some of the political options being examined in the present inter-party talks.

The Mediation Network is often invited by the churches and ecumenical groups to assist them in their work. "Most often when we are bringing people together we begin by inviting people to share their stories, their family life, their individual experiences — rather than discussing issues. As a result human connections are created," explains Baker. "Then later when issues that sometimes do create polarisation come up, people are already related to each other in a personal way and are more able to address their differences with a more positive perspective." Acknowledging that recurring violence in the wider society often sets back good relationships Baker said "Our work often seeks to strengthen the positive bonds that hold the community together so that those things that can divide it don't have the power to so easily destroy links that have been built."

Many — but by no means all — of the peace and reconciliation groups which exist in Northern Ireland have been founded by and are led by those operating out of a Christian commitment. Baker says one of the tragedies has been that "All too often such people have had to go outside their own churches to find the vehicles to do the very thing they believe Christian discipleship calls them to do." The ecumenical movement has a challenge here to assist in convincing the churches of the centrality of peace-making as part of their own life and mission. The contribution of the ecumenical movement can also be important in nurturing the kind of spirituality which may sustain those involved in the peace work for "the long haul".

We give thanks Lord,

for the ceasefires now in place which have brought a reduction in violence in Northern Ireland and for the new possibilities they help to create for inter-party dialogue;

for the vision, creativity and perseverance granted to women and men in many peace and reconciliation groups, local community organisations and the churches in Ireland who are committed to building a lasting peace and whose lives are a witness to the gospel of reconciliation;

for the insights, models and practical support for peacemaking which we continue to receive from many other places in your world.

In pursuing the peace we believe you wish for our land and our world, we confess that all too often:

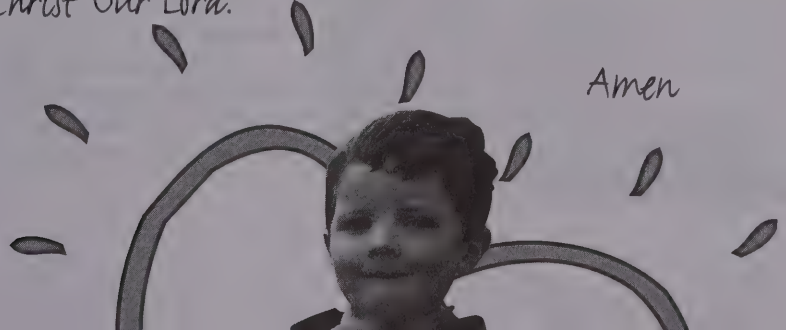
fear holds us back from seeking accommodation with those we perceive as our enemies;

pride makes us slow to admit the shortcomings of our own positions or to recognise the validity of other perspectives , and

our resolve to build just and peaceful societies weakens in the face of controversy and personal cost.

Lord, in your mercy and compassion, forgive us and free us from who we have been and how we have lived, so that we might become who you mean us to be and our lives proclaim the healing of relationships which you make possible, through Jesus Christ Our Lord.

Amen



BOSTON: DEVELOPING A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION AGAINST CRIME AND VIOLENCE

The city of Boston is a culturally, racially and ethnically diverse city with 575,000 inhabitants. Like many US cities, Boston shows economic contrasts, with wealthy and economically impoverished neighbourhoods. The crime rate in the city is high, and not only street violence but home violence hit society. Often, both the victims and perpetrators of juvenile violence are disproportionately minority children who live in the economically depressed neighbourhoods and public housing complexes. Juvenile gang killings have almost quadrupled between 1980 and 1992 and most of the victims are Black or Hispanic.

Different organisations and churches in Boston decided to come together to prevent city violence and work with the victims of crime. Their efforts have showed important results as, according to statistics, Boston's murder rate has been cut by more than one third in the last two years, and only two people under 17 have been killed by gun or knife since July 1995. Both President Clinton and Attorney General Janet Reno have pointed to Boston as a leader in the fight against juvenile crime. Reno has attributed the changing trends in Boston to a "comprehensive effort that balances enforcement with good prevention mechanisms". No one group can take all the credit for changing the traditional approach to problems to a more collaborative and cooperative one. However, key to Boston's success has been the creation of the Boston Ten Point Coalition and the National Ten Point Leadership Foundation.

Working to overcome violence

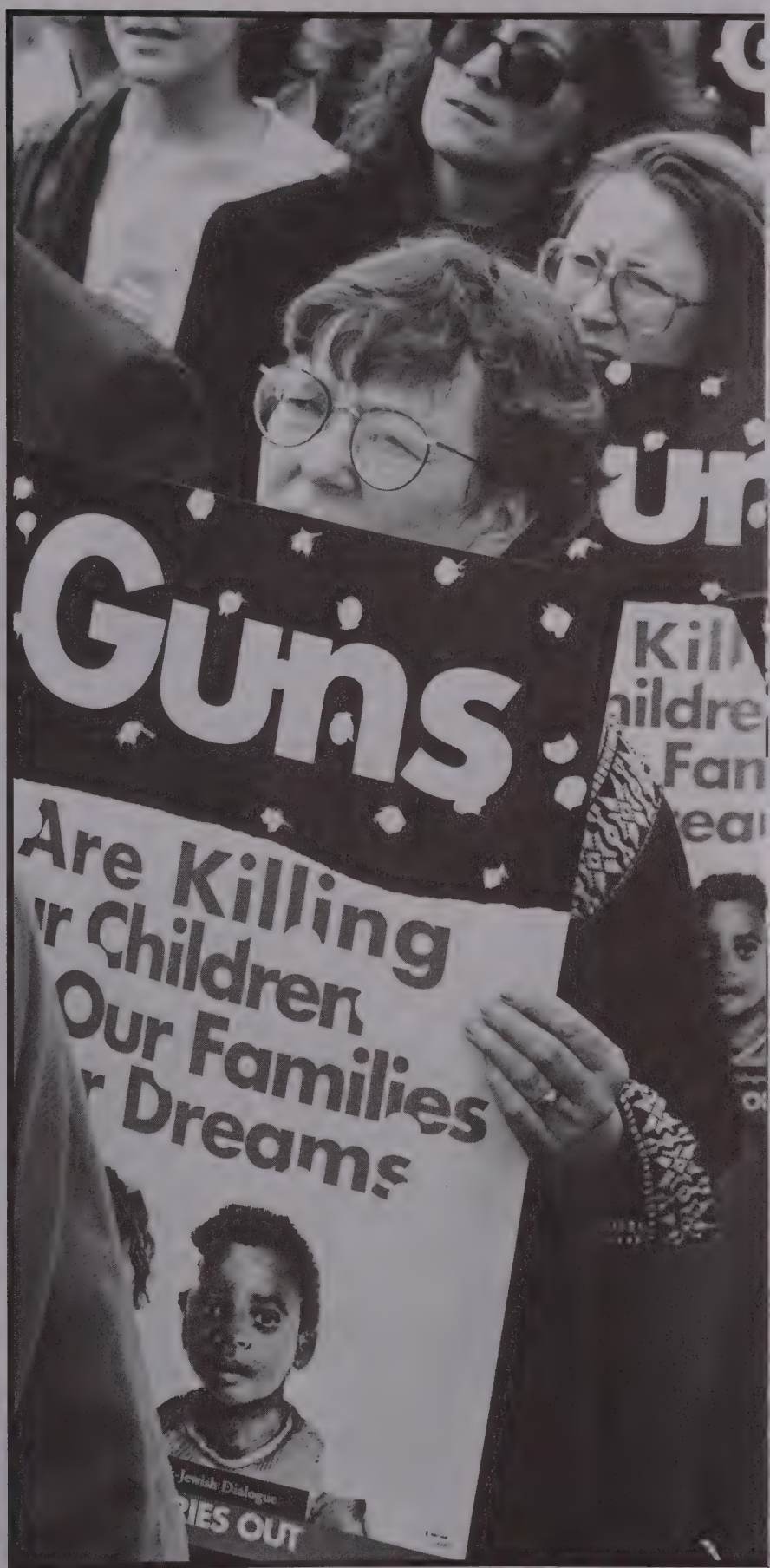
In May 1992, in the wake of a gang-related shooting and stabbing during a funeral at a Baptist Church in Boston, a group of ministers decided to form the Boston Ten Point Coalition. Ten Point is an ecumenical group of Christian clergy and lay leaders working to mobilise the Christian community around issues that affect the Black and Hispanic youth in the city. This organisation does not want to replace the local church but aims to make the local church more effective in the work of rebuilding communities and addressing the problems of youth at risk for violence, drug abuse, gang culture, etc. Ten Point has developed a ministry in the streets, in the prisons and in the homes that has assisted hundreds of at-risk youth and families in the city. The National Ten Point Leadership Foundation has expanded the work of the Boston chapter to spread its ideas on ministry throughout the United States.

Their work is dynamic, inspiring, and challenging to the churches. As Rev. Jeffrey Brown of the National Ten Point Leadership Foundation says, to really address the problems of youth and urban violence "congregations must move out of the four walls of their sanctuaries". He calls on Christians to practice "foot theology — to put their feet where their theologies lie".

Key to their work is the "10 Point Plan to Mobilise the Churches", which includes programmes to organise and evangelise youth in gangs, to reach youth involved in drug-trafficking, to develop economic initiatives in which youth can find new ways of living, to establish working relationships between local churches and community-based health centres to provide pastoral counselling for families during times of crisis and to organise rape crisis drop-in centres and services for battered women in the churches.

But the ministers that work in the Coalition also have other important concerns. They consider that "a generation of poor Black women and children will almost certainly reach the end of this century in an economically, politically and spiritually inferior position to their ancestors, who entered the century in the shadow of slavery." They think that these people lack hope and that they face "social death", which is fundamentally spiritual, rooted in the destruction of faith and hope.

A 1994 demonstration in Washington D.C. against gun violence. Firearm violence is the second leading cause of injury-related death in the United States. Photo: Rick Reinhard / WCC



They also question the integrity, accountability and relevance of Black leadership and work hard so that Black professionals may realise that they have to move beyond empty rethoric and charity and create meaningful ways of benefitting poor communities and of working on effective advocacy for the interests of the marginalised and the dispossessed.

"We call upon Black people, and especially Black churches, intellectuals, politicians and professionals, to rediscover the empowering faith of our forebears. We must develop the ideas and social policies needed to resurrect the entire Black community. We must mobilise our resources. We must serve this community with renewed integrity," says the Executive Committee of the Boston Ten Point Coalition in an article first published by "The Boston Sunday Globe".

Members of the Boston Ten Point Coalition and National Ten Point Leadership Foundation are sure that the church can also advance a model of the civil society and that it is in an unique position to do so. For this reason, the "10 Point Plan" seeks to generate "serious discussion regarding the specific ways in which the Christian community can bring the peace of God to the violent world of our youth".

This Plan includes several challenging actions, like the "Adopt a Gang" programme, to evangelise and organise youth in gangs; the training for missionaries to serve as advocates of Black and Latino youth in the courts; the setting up of accountable community-based economic development initiatives; the support of crime-watch programmes within local church neighbourhoods.

The combined and cooperative efforts of many organisations in Boston have contributed to the dramatic decrease in crime in Boston. Yet, perhaps more than any other single effort, the street ministry of the Ten Point clergy has had the most direct effect — and provides the greatest challenge to the churches.

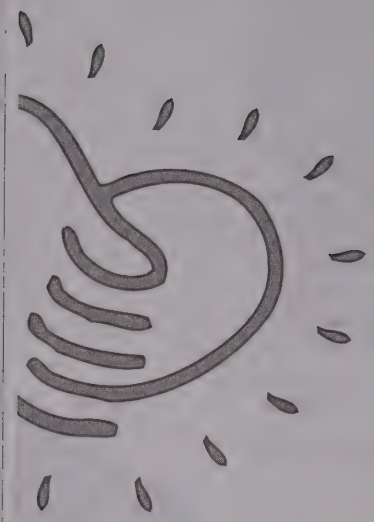
Sal, standing with members of a local gang, was a former drug dealer who "owned" the Four Corners neighborhood in Boston, running a $3,000,000-a-year drug business there. When Rev. Eugene Rivers moved to the neighbourhood and showed that he was serious about living in the community to work with the kids and families, Sal became Gene's "guide," teaching him about the neighbourhood and its residents. Sal told Gene, "If you want to reach these kids, you have to be here all the time. You have to be out on the street when the kids are on their way to school, when they're on their way home, when their mothers send them out to buy a loaf of bread. That's why I've been successful – because I've always been here; I'm the father figure in the neighbourhood."

Through his relationship with Gene, Sal came to realise that his drug business was ultimately going to destroy the community. Sal helped Gene and Rev. Jeffrey Brown to draft the ten points which became the foundation for the Ten Point Coalition and National Ten Point Leadership Foundation. Sal also stopped selling and using drugs. His guidance was critically important to Ten Point's success.

Sadly, Sal decided to try using drugs one last time and overdosed.

Photo: Teny Gross

"O God, our help in ages past
And our hope for the days to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blasts
and our eternal home";



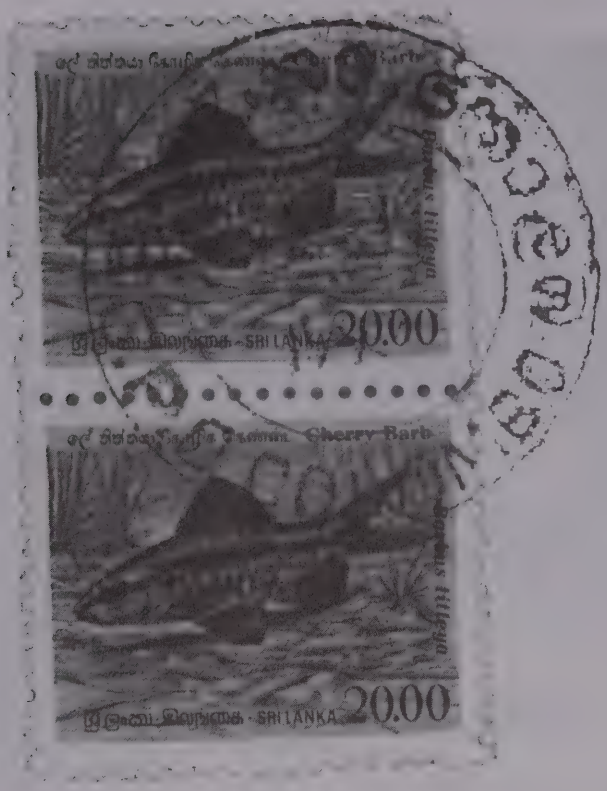
Kind God, we are grateful for this celebration, yet again to
praise and adore you,
and to show our gratefulness for our lives and the lives of those
who are gathered here.
We realise the daunting task of healing cities from the disease
of violence,
but we thank you for affirming the actions of faith that brought
us together
in this Programme to Overcome Violence,
and allowing us to see Martin Luther King's vision, that we are
"All tied together in a single garment of destiny".

And now, we lift up our communities of faith in Boston,
so splendid in their possibilities,
so stricken and uncertain in this moment of our collective history.
We live in a vortex of civil destruction
that spills from our homes and into the streets,
from private places to public places.
We now realise that the greatest destroyer of visions and killer of dreams is not e
but spiritual apathy. It is not death, but fear that weakens us.
Forgive us our blindness to the condition of our children,
and our deafness to their cries to show them hope.
Spare us from their anger for we have failed them.

O Lord, fill our cups till they overflow with a holy determination.
Use us to replace their despair with joy.
Strengthen us, as we find spiritual integrity to place our feet where our theologies
and faithfully believe in the song sung by those in the Civil Rights era:
That we shall overcome...

To the one who makes the crooked straight and the rough places smooth,
let us praise God's name and say

Amen



The search for a just and honourable peace in Sri Lanka

1998 started with a national peace delegates convention in Colombo, Sri Lanka, where 1,700 participants called for an end to the war that divides the country. The convention, sponsored by the National Peace Council, brought together delegates from the different ethnic groups: Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims, many of them from borderline and conflict areas.

These delegates had been doing preparatory work in their own districts, taking part in local workshops involving the wider participation of the communities in the discussions and the preparation of the resolution which was finally adopted at the convention.

In a final resolution the convention called for a just and honourable peace that would include negotiations between government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). It also called for a restructuring of the state that would include self-governance for all nationalities and communities. The demand for equality, dignity and security in the search for peace was one of the key issues for participants, and their main slogan during the meeting expressed their feelings and expectations: "We reject the logic of peace through war. Instead we say: don't wage war on our behalf."

The importance of this meeting, which received goodwill messages from the President, the leader of the opposition and the LTTE, is signified by the fact that all ethnic groups were represented, and even included 50 disabled soldiers who were willing to sign the final declaration. People in Sri Lanka know that the war must end not only with the acceptance of the national aspirations of all communities on the island but with a just political settlement that recognises the interests and well-being of all ethnic groups.

"Life in Sri Lanka has been marked by the inability of the political elites belonging to the different ethnic groups to share

The January 1996 bombing of the Central Bank in Colombo in which over 100 people lost their lives, 80 were blinded and a thousand wounded. More recent bombings, such as the October 1997 bombing of the World Trade Centre and the January 1998 bombing of the Kandy Temple emphasize the intensity of the conflict in Colombo.

Photo: National Peace Council

power equitably among themselves," says Tyrol Ferdinands, general secretary of the National Peace Council. "The difficulty of protecting minority interests in a parliamentary system in which majority-minority relations are strained is exemplified by Sri Lanka's modern political history," he adds.

In the 1970s the cumulative tensions led to demands for a separate Tamil state, armed resistance and civil war. The LTTE, having wiped out the rival Tamil militant groups, emerged as the main armed movement among the Tamils and took control of the Jaffna peninsula. They ruled the northern province for over 5 years, until the Sri Lankan forces wrested away control of a significant part of the Jaffna peninsular in 1996.

During this period in a country of 18 million inhabitants, 100,000 have been killed, 800,000 people are internally displaced and about a million are living abroad. Serious human rights violations have been committed both by the government of Sri Lanka as well as the LTTE; thousands have been abducted, tortured or injured. The war costs Sri Lanka 22% of its GDP annually and has caused a breakdown of social infrastructure.

The war goes on in an intensified frenzy in the North and East. Fighting in the last week of January alone accounted for around 300 deaths, according to figures released by the government of Sri Lanka. This is following the explosion of a powerful bomb by the LTTE at the Sri Dalada Maligawa — the Buddhist temple where the sacred tooth

relic of the Lord Buddha lies — on the 25th of January, killing eight plus the three suicide bombers. In response the Government of Sri Lanka has banned the LTTE. These events have made the goal of peace through negotiations seem even more distant.

The people as guarantors of peace

The failure of party politicians to end the war and obtain a just settlement among the different ethnic groups moved civil society to start working for building peace and paving the way to a political solution.

Several peace accords have collapsed during the past forty years. The peace talks of 1995, which were welcomed with great hope, ended abruptly three months after they started. "This was a shock for everybody," recalls Ferdinands. "The peace movement was taken aback and we had to look for new and creative ways in our work." The National Peace Council (NPC) had just been created at a conference held in February 1995. "The peace effort taking place was fragile because the structures that generated civil war remained intact," says Ferdinands. "Political agreements to end the conflict failed due to lack of political will at the top, and people's support for the peace process from the bottom. Indeed, the general population was left out of all previous attempts at reaching a negotiated political settlement."

When the peace talks broke down, the NPC found itself alone opposing the government's declaration of "a war for peace". Most of the other peace groups agreed with the government position that "A genuine effort at negotiations was made and the LTTE betrayed once again the trust and goodwill that prevailed." This simplistic analysis of the breakdown of peace talks resulted in even the peace movements tacitly supporting the official policy.

The NPC however, analysed the breakdown of the peace talks differently and made its position clear by stating that the only way of ending the war through negotiations is to include the LTTE in the process, and address the national aspirations of the Tamil people.

Encounter between a Buddhist monk and Hindu swami from two villages that straddle the border of the conflict zone.
Building on the foundations of different faiths, different backgrounds and traditions, recapturing traditional community relations of cooperation, the National Peace Council promotes dialogue at all levels. From Parliamentarians to business persons, from peasant farmers and workers to political activists, their work takes a multi track approach seeking to create an awareness on the need and a political consensus for a negotiated settlement to the war.

Photo: National Peace Council

As part of its efforts in peace education, the National Peace Council uses high impact multi-media campaigns.

"This meant that the NPC recognised the reality of the Tamil community in Sri Lanka as a distinct community," considers Ferdinand. Thus the aspiration of the Tamil community would only be met by a solution that would go beyond multiculturalism towards a significant degree of self rule.

The NPC supported several important points as basic premises. First, historical experience had proven that the task of ensuring a just and lasting peace could not be entrusted to the state nor to the prevailing political system. Second, the people are the fundamental guarantors of such a peace and their democratic aspirations for peace should be given effective institutional expression. And third, this expression to be forceful and genuine must remain independent of all political forces while ensuring the democratic rights of the oppressed.

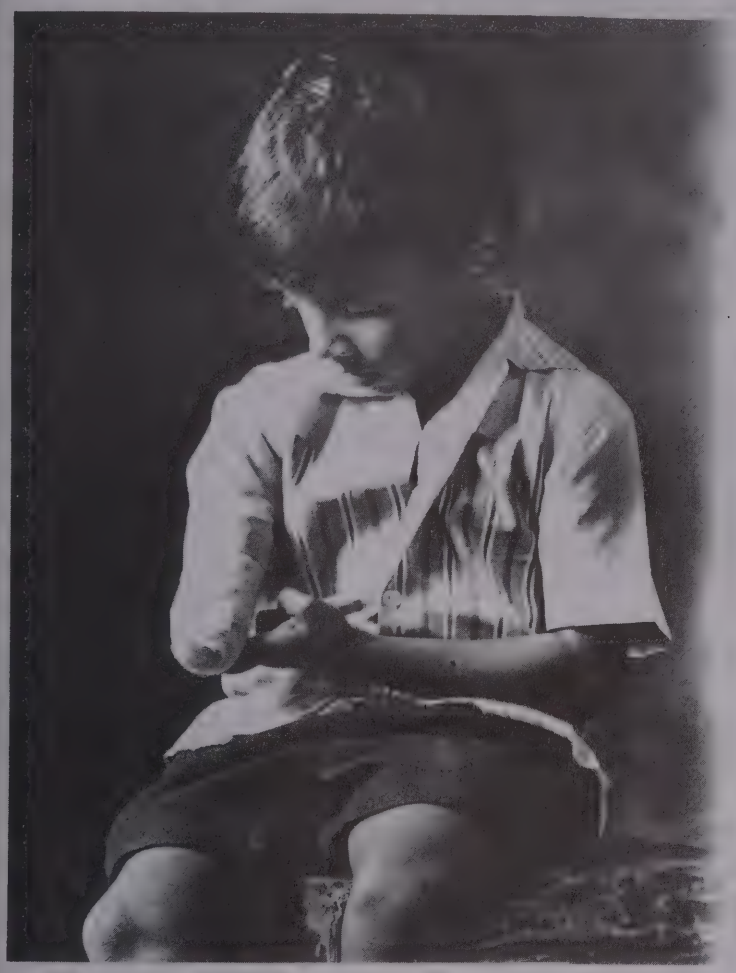
The NPC decided to start its peace work mobilising grassroots organisations, NGO networks, sectoral organisations, political elites, religious leaders, communities and cultural agents.

Education for dialogue and reconciliation

Colombo, the capital city, can be considered a microcosm of the entire country. The city is a decision-making centre and what happens there has a major influence on the politics and economy of the whole country. Though the war takes place far away from Colombo, it rebounds there in many ways. The NPC has its headquarters there, but reaches most of the country with its peace campaign.

The campaign focused on three main areas of programmatic work to educate the people and the leadership about the need and possibilities for a negotiated political settlement of the conflict. The base of this programme is peace education, and high national visibility and impact have been sought, using the media and conducting large-scale peace events.

Workshops have been organised at the grassroots level to provide participants with an oppor-



WILL YOU BE GIVING A HAND TO THE WAR EFFORT?

The war is costing the nation an arm and a leg. And all too often it is the innocents who are paying the price. But the war affects us all. The war is in the rising cost of goods. The war is in the decline of our education standards. The war is in the deterioration of our health services. The war is in the destruction of our future. For all our sacrifice, victory seems to elude us. Maybe because we regard genuine understanding and compromise as something akin to defeat. Think about it.

IS THIS WHAT WE ARE FIGHTING FOR?

WAR DOES NOT WIN PEACE

National Peace Council
291/50, Havelock Gardens, Colombo 6. Phone/Fax: 594378

tunity to learn the discipline of conflict resolution, share experiences, evaluate the peace process and formulate strategies for sharing this knowledge with others. Mass campaigns were able to publicise themes such as "give a hand to peace", "peace for children", "war will not win peace" and "bullets don't give a people's mandate". As NPC does not have a political agenda, some of the posters produced on these themes were requested by government, and even the military, to use in their programmes for peace.

Peace marches have taken place in different parts of the country, and the practice of vigils for peace has encouraged people's participation. By taking part in these activities, people become aware that everybody should commit himself/herself to peace by putting an end to the prevailing culture of violence and demanding peaceful negotiations between all parties and a redirection of expense from defence to development.

Politicians are also reached by the NPC's programmes. Workshops and exposure programmes are organised to facilitate encounters and dialogue. An important experience took place in 1996 when a group of governmental and opposition members of parliament visited Northern Ireland. They came out with a joint statement that was considerably in excess of the positions then officially held by their political parties.

When people realise that they have the capacity to contribute to peace, they gain confidence and start thinking of doing things together. Peacemaking in Sri Lanka has a lot to do with bringing people together in order to understand each other's way of life, perspectives and expectations, so that joining efforts for peace building may become a reality.

Lord of all

being of all worlds! Those who can see,
do see that we are part of the heavenly worlds as the Lord of compassion taught us:
"You are gods! Sons and Daughters of the Highest"
(John 10:13)

Our home is not this world. We are here, guests for a time.
We praise you for all the saints and angels and all the heavenly
beings who do not cease to guide humankind,
who do not cease to inspire our minds with knowledge, ideas,
wisdom, science, arts, music, song, to assist everyone who wishes so
in their training here like sportsmen giving everything in their efforts
with so much endurance, so much perseverance to acquire skills, personality, virtue,
partnership, tolerance: all so much required in the heavenly worlds.

Enmity never ceases by enmity at any time.
Only through non-enmity it ceases;
the Buddha taught mankind (Dhammapada 1.5)
and Jesus worded it again
in this simple form: "Love your enemies".

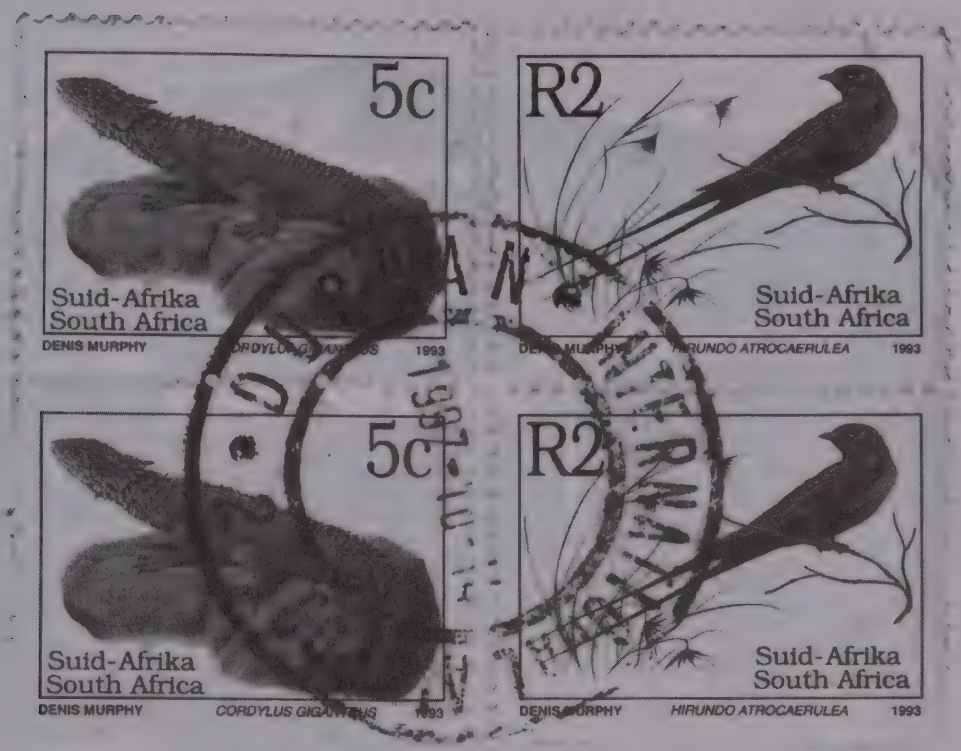
Yet we have to admit that also we rather take the right
to answer enmity with enmity, hate with hate.
And we admit that our minds are polluted by self-righteousness,
domination, and delusions of superiority.
And our minds are clouded by notions of blame as if anyone was free of it.
We blame and blame and cannot forgive, moreover,
by blaming the others we assume righteousness and the right to
dominate again.

Oh Lord of compassion, give us eyes to see the hurt soul behind the hatred;
the soul, deprived of its right to pursue happiness.

Give me vision to rise above hate, indifference, blaming and being hurt.

If it is this I still need to learn to love even those who destroy
then teach me to transmit loving kindness to those who violate;
to those who have only learned to hate, to transmit all goodness to heal their souls;
and to radiate godly powers daily with all strength and will;
all goodness to those who hurt.

Amen



Peace and tolerance in Durban, South Africa

Peacemaking in the city of Durban and its surrounding area, the Durban Functional Region, involves a variety of levels and sectors of society ready to make different contributions to this process. Grassroots communities, community-based organisations, non-governmental organisations, churches and religious organisations, business, political and religious leadership have come together in order to overcome much of the destruction caused by political violence in the region.

In this violence, thousands of people have been killed, many more thousands have been injured and untold numbers of homes, properties, community facilities, clinics and schools have been destroyed. In a region with 8 million people, nearly half-a-million have been displaced from their homes by violence. The high degree of political intolerance, especially at the community level, has created a very large number of "no-go-areas" for one or other political party.

Despite the introduction of democratic electoral processes, a political culture in which violence is considered a legitimate means of maintaining or contesting party dominance has yet to be transformed. Nevertheless, peacemaking has been possible due to the deep constitutional and legislative changes at national, provincial and local levels that have taken place since 1994.

Election time can be a time for violence. Tension went up in the 1994 and 1996 elections and there is the fear of increasing problems as the 1999 elections approach. Analysts consider that violence is

Hundreds of houses and shops have been burned or destroyed in the ongoing political conflict

Photo: Peter Williams / WCC

stirred up by people attached to the old system who want to disrupt the democratic process that is changing life and traditions in South Africa. Traditional leadership has a sense of being threatened by the new system that creates new leaders and puts an end to the old power structure.

The lack of an acceptable local framework of institutions or local forums, where differences can be discussed and debated, only worsens the situation. The local peace committees have worked hard on these issues and have tried to become acceptable substitutes that would facilitate dialogue and encounter among all parties. The local peace committees have in recent times struggled to be effective, due to perceptions that they are led by one political party, allegations of corruption and the inadequate political commitment to see them succeed

For many years peace groups found it difficult to motivate churches to take part in the peace process and to get involved in social issues. But things have changed now and a group of churches is leading enthusiastic work for peace in Durban.

Need for instruction and reconciliation

The Diakonia Council of Churches, formed by 14 member churches and 3 member organisations, works with the churches, helping them to get involved in four priority issues: peacemaking, economic justice, democracy education and AIDS.

In its work with the Ecumenical Peacemakers Programme, Diakonia has helped to coordinate 30 volunteers in the Durban Functional Region. They managed to monitor and mediate conflict situations related to the local government elections in 1994. This Programme also helps to identify existing peace structures and to strengthen them with the churches' participation.

"Churches have a specific identity in Durban. They are known to be impartial and this facilitates their role in conflict mediation," says Mike Vorster, coordinator of Diakonia's peace team. "It was important to train church leaders in mediation. This encouraged churches to get involved in monitoring the elections, helping to create an atmosphere of tolerance during in that period."

But not everything is easy for the peace workers. One of them, working on democracy education, was threatened by political groups that considered that his work in a local community was a menace to their traditional power structure. The volunteer had to be removed from his task and the organisation had to find other ways of working with that community. Since this incident took place, two local bishops en-

Meeting with local authorities after a new incident of political violence Photo: Peter Williams / WCC

couraged their local ministers to intervene. The peace worker is now able to return to the area.

Diakonia also trains and prepares church people to be involved in the Community Police Forums. These forums do not always deal directly with political violence, but help to develop better relationships between the police, mistrusted because of their role during apartheid, and communities.

"There are some success stories in this work that have resulted in more effective policing and better relationships with the community", says Vorster. "It was a whole new experience to have police men and women at the meetings. Some of them even delivered presentations, something quite unusual in our city."

This new relationship is helping people and police forces to tackle other key issues that still have to be dealt with, like police corruption, gun smuggling, political manipulation of police and community suspicion of the police.

Another aspect of the Diakona Council of Churches' peace effort is to work with people who have been traumatised by violence. Thousands of people have suffered from seeing their family killed or beaten, or the destruction of their homes and properties. This organisation has created a counselling project in which 130 people have been trained, 80 of them church people. These people will be able to train others so as to have a big network of people ready to help the traumatised.

The Diakonia Council of Churches are part of the 16 human rights and peace organisations and networks that have joined the Peace to the City Campaign in Durban. Some of them are religious and some are NGOs. Their aim is to present an honest picture of "peace in the making" in their region.

A great deal has been done in Durban to promote peace in the region, but Vorster considers that there is still a lot to be achieved. "Our story reflects the fragility and incompleteness of the peace that has been made and the fact that there are continuing threats to that peace", he says. "Where peacemaking has been most successful, there has been much communication, collaboration and lobbying between different levels and sectors," he adds.

All those willing to work in the Peace to the City Campaign in Durban know that cooperation and good communication come first. They sense that no one group can take credit for successes achieved in peacemaking. They believe that the cumulative effect of many different initiatives is the main basis for success.

Umkhukeko wokukhankasela

uxolo edolobheni

Masikhu le ke umkhuleko wokukhankase la uxolo edolobheni.

Kuhlakanipha kwaphakade,
siphethu sempilo yonke, Olizwi lakho lingukuphila

Sihlokomela uduno lwakho, sithokozela indalo yakho, sigubha
isipho sempilo

Siyakubonga ngokukhipha izwe lethu umzansi Afrika,
ebuqqileni nasehlane lobandlululo
walikhiphela ezweni lesethembiso nethemba

Siyakubonga ngokukhipha isifunda sethu ikwazulu-Natal
ekubhubheni nasekuqedweni izimpi zemibango yezinhlangano
usikhiphela ukuba kube nokuzwana nokubekezelelana

Siyakubonga ngokukhipha idolobha lethu iTheku
ekucindezelweni ukwahlukana nokubuswa ngokobuhlanga
walikhiphela ukuba kube nokusebenzisana nenkululeko

Siyazibona, siyaziyuma futhi izono zethu nobuthakathaka bethu

Intando yakho ukuba bonke abantu bakhululeke
kodwa thina sikuvumele ukucindezela
ukuba sihlukumeze amalungelo nesithunzi sesintu

Intando yakho ukuba bonke abantu bahlale ngoxolo
kodwa sikuvumele ukuphalala kwegazi
nokugothula ngomlilo
novalo ukuze sihlukumeze abantu bakho

Intando yakho ukuba bonke bathokozele impilo ephelele
Kodwa sibuvumele ubumpofu, ukugula nokwabelana
Ngokungalingani ebuningini bengcebo osiphe yona
Konke lokhu sikwenze ngezenzo zethu nokungenzi lutho

Sisize siyamukele intethelelo yakho
nokuba sithethelelane
ukuze sabelane kanye kanye
ekuguqulweni kwedolobha lakho nomhlaba wakho

Sigcwalise ngobunene ukuze sisingathe ikhono lokududuza
nokwelapha labo abahlukumezekile, sigcwalise ngesibindi
sokubhekana nezakhiwo ezingenabulungiswa

Siphe ithemba, ubugotho nozwelo
ukuze sikwenqabe ukucindezelwa kwamagugu omhlaba
ukuze sikungobe ubuvila nokungazikhathazi
ukuze sikungobe ukuphelelwa ithemba

Sengathi idolobha nomhlaba wakho
kungagcwala uxolo lwakho ngokupheleleyo
ukuze bonke abantu bakho bakhethe impilo

Amen

Eternal Wisdom, source of all life, whose word is life

We sing your praises, we rejoice in your creation, we celebrate your gift of life

We praise you for bringing our country South Africa,
through the captivity and wilderness of apartheid to a place of promise and hope

We thank you for bringing our province KwaZulu-Natal
through the death and destruction of civil war
to the possibility of understanding and tolerance

We bless you for bringing our city Durban
through the oppression of racial division and domination
to an experience of shared participation and democracy

We acknowledge and confess our own sin and shortcomings
Your will is that all should be free
yet we have allowed oppression
to violate human rights and dignity

Your will is that all should live in peace
yet we have allowed blood to be spilled,
fire to destroy,
and terror to overcome your people

Your will is that all should enjoy wholeness of life
yet we have allowed poverty, sickness
and unequal sharing of the abundance of your resources

All this we have done by our actions and by our inaction

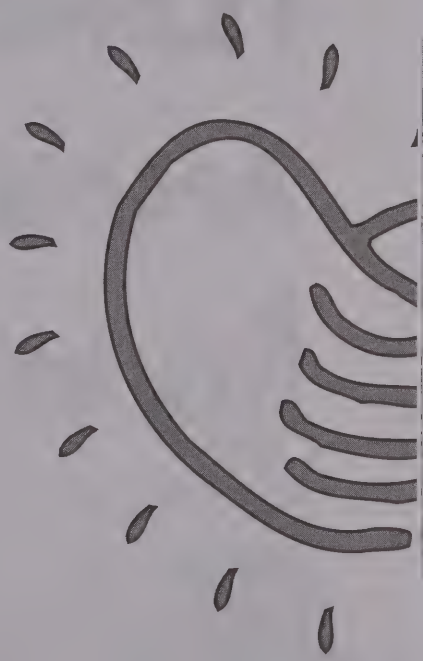
Help us to receive your forgiveness
and to forgive each other
So that together we may share
in the transformation of your city and your world.

Fill us with gentleness to embrace the grieving
skill to heal the traumatised
courage to challenge unjust structures

Give us trust, integrity and passion
that we may refuse to be choked by material possessions
that we may overcome complacency and laziness
that we may conquer despair

May your city and your world
be filled with your peace and wholeness
so that all your people may choose life.

Amen



S-Corner Clinic: Promoting Peace among the Poor in Kingston, Jamaica

by Imani Tafari-Ama

"Poverty is a crime" is an old adage in Jamaica and today many people voice this sentiment in recognition of the daily despair experienced by those in Jamaica who live below the poverty line, in literal as well as figurative senses. The social geography of Kingston, the capital city, clearly differentiates between the rich and the poor; an acute sense of this divide haunts the areas designated "garrisons" for historical and political reasons. Yet, because life is full of contradictions, there are also hopeful initiatives to employ creative human resources to the greatest advantage of the displaced and dispossessed of Jamaican society.

"Garrison communities" are housing enclaves which were constructed to capture the voter support of the urban poor under the political administrations of the People's National Party (PNP) and the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP). Nowadays, the people who inhabit these areas do not have any great sense of internal social cohesion nor are they, in the classical definition of the term, defending themselves from external attack. That description might have applied during the decade of the

S-Corner Clinic & Community Development - Photo: Salpy Eskidjian

1970s when violent political turfism was the order of the day. In the period preceding the 1980 general election, some eight hundred persons died as a result of tribal politics leading to gun warfare between supporters of the two major political parties.

The garrisons are currently characterised by internal conflicts which community people interpret as war. It is estimated that there are about twelve garrisons in the city of Kingston. Low education levels prevent participants in this cycle of poverty and violence from recognising their victim status and the macro economic situation which maintains their position on the lower rungs of the social ladder. Peace, defined as the absence of gun slayings, is therefore such a rare and expensive commodity in this environment that any initiative towards this goal is viewed with skepticism and mistrust.

One area to have pioneered a sustained peace is the Waltham Park community of Bennetland. The S-Corner Clinic and Grassroots college, a non-governmental organisation which serves this community of some six thousand residents through health and education programmes, has helped create an atmosphere of mediation and conflict resolution, resulting in a peace truce that has lasted since April 1997.

Fifty-five percent of the population in the S-Corner area are women. Heads of households are also principally female. The district displays all the stereotypical characteristics of urban poverty, from gangs, to teenage parents, to youths lounging on the corner, to skinny dogs scavenging in the gutters. The "community" has been plagued by intense and prolonged gang rivalry which has claimed numerous lives, especially of young men, and restricted the residents from crossing invisible "boundaries" of crew turf.

This tailoring of space has been a serious impediment to economic initiatives and social interaction. Gang members have been unable to pursue external employment opportunities, develop self-employment activities within the community, or participate in social gatherings like dances, which are normally seen as a means of relieving the stresses of everyday life. The fear of gang shootouts or more deliberate executions has, for the past twenty years or so, held the community in a vice.

In such circumstances, it is difficult to inspire and facilitate community action for change. Routine disruptions have fatigued and frustrated the majority of community residents. Recognising that the cycle of senseless shootings and stabbings was an expression of internalised oppression, the S-Corner project team took the responsibility to step in and help heal the breach.They created space to meet individually and collectively with community members from various factions and lanes, to raise consciousness about the similarity between the history of slavery and the violent prison-like conditions of life in the garrisons.

The consciousness-raising placed emphasis on identity and the urgent need for people of African descent to emancipate themselves from the restrictions imposed by social

Outside S-Corner Clinic - Bennetland Photo: Salpy Eskidjian

geography, but also from the mental limitations that territorial warfare implies. Participants in the peace initiative were urged to free themselves of the self-imposed chains which prevented their free access to the various blocks or corners.

Institutional leaders involved in formalising the peace truce initiative included representatives from the mainstreet Catholic St. Peter Claver, and locally led revival churches, the respected school headmistress, the clinic director, and two members of the community council, a long-standing local development institution.

It has required immense effort on the part of all the stakeholders to sustain the process of meeting with individuals and facilitating the coming together of groups to discuss the reasons for war and to begin to develop strategies for peace. To date, this has been the most organised attempt to bring peace to the area. People are beginning to hope that it can last, to feel free to traverse the "garrison" at will, and to shed the fear that has haunted young and old for the last generation.

This picture of success is not without its flaws; trust is understandably hard to build and the peace participants have inevitably encountered obstacles. Often, it is as if the warring factions have forgotten the original reasons for their feuds; what seems more important is to get even. Nevertheless, guidelines for conflict resolution which are binding on all brokers in the process now exist.

Project director Angela Stultz-Crawlle admits the process is slow but is confident it will work. As an example of success, she tells how someone stole a television set from someone in another area. Normally, this incident would have sparked a shootout because the victim of the robbery was related to the former rival of the thief. Instead, the offended parties asked project staff to request mediation to advise the offender to return the stolen item, which he subsequently did. For Mrs Stultz-Crawlle, this event marks "the change of attitudes and behaviours that peace brings".

Another example is that some gangs have come together and volunteered to clear an open lot; the project provided necessary human and material resources to facilitate their working together.

Project personnel have also been liaising with external contractors to employ gang members so that they can earn some money, thereby reducing the push factors which result in criminal behaviours. Of course these are mere drops in the ocean of unemployment; statistics of under-development remain high. Community residents now feel free to come to the clinic to take advantage of the subsidised medicine and other social facilities; if anyone feels unsafe to cross territory still considered forbidden ground, they send for an S-Corner representative to escort them.

Through an integrated approach to preserving peace, S-Corner is simultaneously addressing spiritual and material needs, and thus a balance in peoples' self-realisation. Poverty might be a crime, but where there is the will, it can be solved.

Imani Tafari-Ama is a multimedia journalist and action researcher concerned with development issues affecting the poor. She is currently engaged in research on gender, power and sexuality in one of Jamaica's inner-city communities, as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. degree in Development Studies at the Institute of Social Studies in the Netherlands.

Basic education at Operation Friendship, one of the oldest community development centers in Kingston, serving two peace treaty areas, Tivoli Gardens and Bennetlands
Photo: Salpy Eskidjian

O Eternal God

the source and strength of those who put their trust in you,
God of Love,
God of our well-being, we praise you for your grace and favour.

We confess O God of Love
that we have failed to love, support and respect one another
and that we have been impotent
in the face of growing violence in our cities.

We bless your name for the people of the Caribbean,
for their growing love and respect for peace;
for their willingness to dialogue to resolve their conflicts,
for their growing appreciation of the gift of our climate
and the blessedness of the shores of our islands,
for the hope of a better and more secure future
we thank you God.

Amen

A MOVEMENT BORN OUT OF PASSION

"Viva Rio was born out of passion," affirms Walter Mattos, a young and successful journalist, owner of "Lance!" a daily paper dedicated to sports. "This happened at a time when people did not expect much from Rio de Janeiro. Many just wanted to move out, to leave the city. There was no investment and the city's economy was going bad. We faced a situation that seemed irreparable. The crime rate had gone up fast and people were scared to death."

Mattos was recalling the year 1993, when Rio was shaken by two incidents that shocked international public opinion: the killing of seven street children and one teenager by policemen in the neighbourhood of "La Candelaria" church, in the heart of Rio de Janeiro, and the massacre of the Vigario Geral shanty town, where military police killed 21 innocent people.

"I felt that I couldn't go on living in this city without doing something to change the situation," remembers Mattos. "I loved this city. My son was born here and I wanted to remain here. I came to the conclusion that I wouldn't

The massacre of 21 workers by police in the slum of "Vigerio Garal" in August 1993, was one of a series of tragedies that scandalised the country and gave birth to Viva Rio to bring all sectors of the city together to put an end to violence. Photo: Gianne Carvalho - IT / WCC

stand impotence." Mattos' concern led him to get in touch with several personalities and leaders from Rio, inviting them to join forces in order to find solutions that would put an end to the atmosphere of fear, distrust and social disintegration that had taken hold of the city.

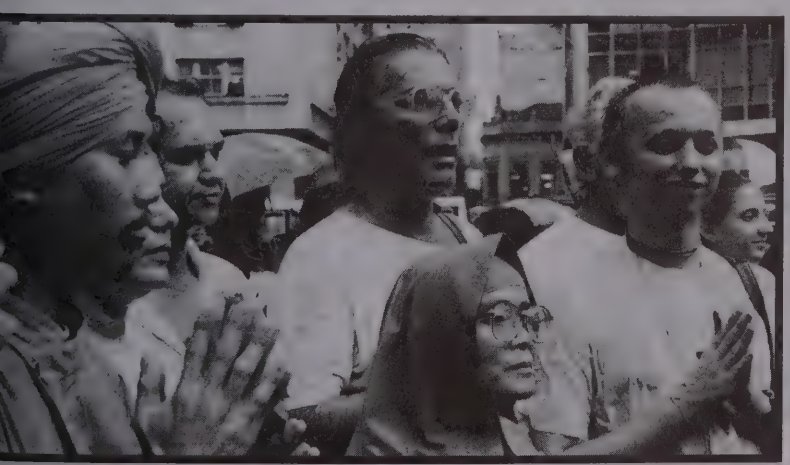
Things were getting worse as social tension increased. In the spring of 1993, young kids and teenagers from the shanty towns (favelas) invaded the beaches, provoking panic amongst the middle class. According to anthropologist Luiz Eduardo Soares, Rio was suffering violence "in three of its mythical spaces: the sacred space (the Candelaria church), the domestic space (the people killed in their homes), and the space for democratic co-existence (the beaches)".

Two minutes of silence for peace

Walter Mattos was able to reach people from different backgrounds who became very enthusiastic about his project. Intellectuals, media people, trade union leaders, businessmen, church people, representatives from NGOs and social movements came together with the idea of working for peace in the city. Herbert de Souza, a renowned sociologist, very much respected by Brazilian society for his commitment to the poor and the hungry, led the initiative and the media representatives backed it up, using the press, radio and TV.

As a first step, the Viva Rio committee decided to call all the inhabitants to observe two minutes of silence for peace. They chose to do this on a Friday noon in December 1993, and everybody supporting the idea was asked to dress in white. Many thought it was a wild idea even to suggest that a big city like Rio, with five million inhabitants, would stop at least for two minutes in support of peace.

But as time went by, the idea started to grow and many people were willing to support it. That Friday noon, the city really stopped. The shops closed their doors, the traffic stopped, people came out of their houses and offices and stood in silence. The Viva Rio leadership formed a human chain to embrace the Candelaria church. Most of the people were



On Friday 17 December 93, Viva Rio called all the inhabitants of Rio to observe two minutes of silence for peace and to dress in white in sign of their support • Photo: Eduardo Band

The counter of Rights at Rocinha slum offers free legal aid
Photo: Daniel Mattar

dressed in white, to show their will to work for peace.

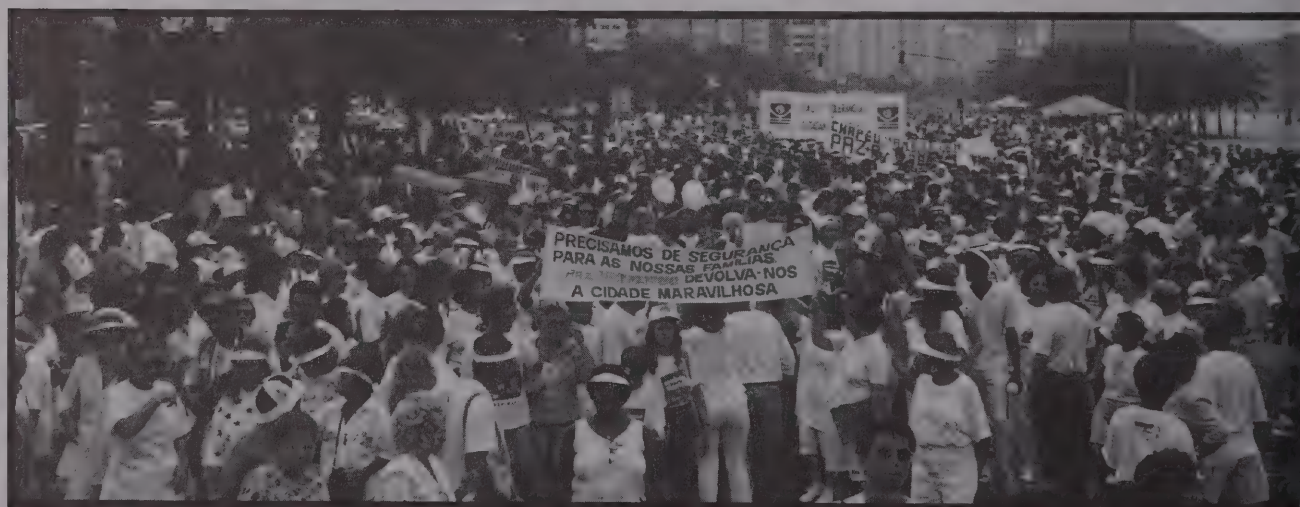
Working to overcome violence

The Viva Rio leadership was not being naïve. They all knew that their work would be difficult and without immediate results. Social tensions and violence would only end if people were able to work together with the same aims. People would have to become aware that everybody should do their bit to favour peace.

With the support of different social sectors, Viva Rio started its work knowing that one of the main problems in Rio was the big social gap that separates the rich from the poor, the elegant and well-off neighbourhoods from the favelas. It also knew that special efforts should be made in favour of youth from the poor areas, in order to help them in their education and their qualifications to obtain a decent job.

"One of the problems we face in Rio is the high rate of violent deaths among the youth," says Rubem César Fernandes, an anthropologist and coordinator of Viva Rio. "The death rate among teenagers in Rio is double the death rate among their peers in American cities," he adds. Rubem points out that most of these teenagers don't live in the streets, but at home, and that many of them meet a violent death in the streets of their own neighbourhoods.

Some of them may be members of gangs dedicated to stealing or drug-trafficking, but others just happen to be around when a



November 94, Copacabana Beach, Rio de Janeiro. First Peace march on the occasion of the opening of the international conference on Holism which was co-ordinated by UNIPAZ - Peace University based in Brasilia. Other NGOs like ISER, IBASE and Viva were involved.
Photo: Daniel Mattar

fight between drug-gangs, or drug-gangs and the military police start. In 1992, police confiscated 4,000 machine guns in the shanty towns. Statistics show that there are around half a million weapons in the hands of the people in Rio. Most of them have been bought on the black market and are illegal.

Viva Rio started an educational programme dedicated to teenagers and youth, with the involvement of the local community. 60% of the pupils in Rio do not end their primary school studies and only 20% of the population get to secondary school. In a programme co-sponsored by the Secretary of Labour, young people over 17 attend classes so as to finish their primary school studies and get better qualifications in order to enter the work market. The youth attend classes with a maximum of 25 pupils and the methodologies used are far from classic school teaching, with videos and discussion among the pupils as key methodologies.

But the pupils are not alone in their effort. The surrounding community is also part of it. Classes do not take place at schools, but at different local organisations: clubs, churches, neighbours' guilds and *scola do samba* sites. Each local organisation offers its facilities, that must include a TV set and a video. The organisations get a subsidy according to the number of pupils. During 1997, 223 classrooms of this sort functioned in Rio de Janeiro, with 7,000 pupils.

The experience proved to be very successful and there are plans to start a new programme that would involve young people between 18 and 19 who have not entered the military service, which is compulsory in Brazil. Local organisations will also participate and the programme includes five hours of class attendance, plus computer training and education for citizenship. Each pupil will also have to do 5 hours of community work per week, planned by the local organisation. The pupil receives a monthly payment equivalent to half a basic salary, that is around 60 dollars.

People responsible for these programmes believe that giving youth the possibility of getting employed helps them to get out of the influence of the gangs and the trafficking in the shanty towns. But still, there is a lot more to do in order to reach many more young people and to overcome the social tensions that create violence.

Education for Peace

Viva Rio has many other programmes in its effort to overcome violence in a difficult city. Some of them are related to the need to raise awareness in favour of disarmament. A campaign was organised to show the dangers of owning weapons and having them at home, in the car, or in the work place. Viva Rio's work is based on solid research as it is headquartered at and functions in partnership with the Institute for Religious Studies (ISER).

Other efforts are made in order to stop police violence. A group of researchers is working hard on this issue and has been able to relate to police forces in other parts of the country and contribute to seminars and meetings where these matters are discussed.

The treatment of family violence and violence among neighbours is in the hands of "Rights Desks", a network of lawyers specialised in conflict mediation and resolution. They work in the very poor shanty towns resolving many situations that would end in violence if people found that the legal system doesn't have answers to their daily conflicts and needs. The need to give opportunities to micro-business in the shanty towns is also recognised. Special loans for low-income shop owners and street salespeople have been created with the support of local banks and foundations.

"The reaction to the crisis was positive from the civil society side," says Rubem César. "It brought together many different sectors that are willing to go on struggling so that we may all go on living in Rio, with less tensions, discrimination, or exclusion."

On Friday 17 December 93, Viva Rio called all the inhabitants of Rio to observe two minutes of silence for peace and to dress in white in sign of their support.

Photo: Eduardo Band

Pai, peço que o teu amor cubra o Rio de Janeiro
com o Espírito Santo; de tal modo
que o seu povo perceba a sua vocação para a paz.

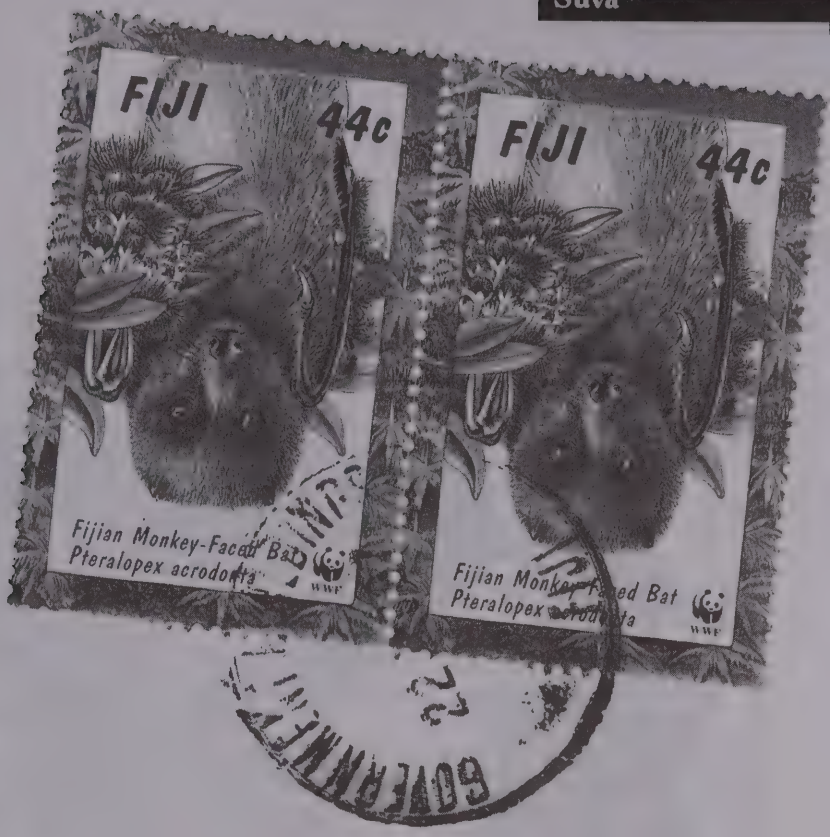
Dá-nos o coração de Cristo
para que possamos compreender os corações uns dos outros.

Em nome de Jesus
Amén

Father, we ask you to let the love of the Holy Spirit cover
the city of Rio de Janeiro;
that the people of Rio may discover their vocation for peace.

Give us the heart of Christ,
so that we may understand the hearts of other men and women

In Christ's name
Amen



CITIZENS WORK FOR A MULTI-ETHNIC, MULTI-RELIGIOUS AND MULTI-PARTY SOCIETY IN FIJI

Fiji has faced confrontation between its two main ethnic groups, the indigenous Fijians and the Indo-Fijians who live in the country since the end of last century. At present, 51.1% of the population are indigenous Fijians, most of them Christians, and 43.6% are IndoFijian, most of them Hindus. When Fiji became independent in 1970, the parliamentary system adopted did not give solutions to the situation. The distrust that existed between the two major ethnic groups crystallised into the formation of two major political parties along racial lines. The Indian National Federation Party and the Fijian-dominated Alliance Party were never able to share power nor decision-making. It seemed that the indigenous Fijians would be in power for ever.

But in 1987 the new Fiji Labour Party in a coalition with the National Federation Party won the elections. Ethnicity then became a major issue and a military coup took place to restitute power to the indigenous Fijians. Two weeks of violence against the Indo-Fijian community followed. Destruction of properties, burglaries with violence, commercial house robberies, beatings of Indo-Fijians and racial violence became a daily fact. Active destabilisation and nationalistic supremacy were the mood.

But the Indo-Fijian community had in its hands most of the businesses and services in the country. Economic pressure started both from inside and from the international forum. A political solution had to

A group of Fijian women of different ethnic backgrounds wearing the traditional sari to celebrate the Hindi Festival of Light, known as Diwali – a significant demonstration of respect by the ethnic Fijian women for a special religious festival of Indo-Fijians. *Photo: Atu Baine*

be found, but the new constitution produced in 1990 assured supremacy to the indigenous Fijians. This created a new polarised political situation and tension went on growing. A new agreement was needed in order to overcome prevailing antagonism in society.

Creating an atmosphere for dialogue and encounter

In 1993 the Citizens' Constitutional Forum was formed by academics, the NGO community and independent citizens who wanted to contribute to political dialogue and ethnic reconciliation. This group had the support of International Conciliation, an NGO with headquarters in London that works on conciliation through constitutional making.

This Forum worked hard in order to meet with every group interested in building a sustainable multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society in Fiji. Consultations took place with all the different sectors to help create consensus in order to reach a negotiated settlement of the situation.

"Our first priority was to get over ethnic divisions. Then we could begin looking at the nation as a whole," says Amelia Rokotuivuna, member of Pacific Regional YWCA, who took active part in the Citizen's Constitutional Forum. "It was important to expose leaders to the different ideas and to the fact that power-sharing should be viable in Fiji."

The Forum focussed on obtaining affirmative actions and tried to deal with different hot issues

separately. For instance, the indigenous Fijians felt that they had a lower standard of education and that their participation in business was also low. It was important to assure that these aspirations would be taken into account in a new political arrangement. Experts were brought in to deal with these specific issues.

After two years of work, a report was produced with guidelines for creating a sustainable society in Fiji and mechanisms to keep it going. Political agreement and consensus was obtained and finally, in July 1997, a new constitution was passed. There is great hope in civil society that this new situation will help to build peace in the nation and prevent violent conflicts, as the new constitution enhances diversity and pluralism.

Land situation: a need to come to an agreement

Another issue that arouses ethnic problems has to do with land ownership. 96% of the land in Fiji is communally owned. There is a Native Land Trust Board that looks after the interests of the traditional owners. Many Indo-Fijian tenant farmers who work in the production of sugar cane will have to renew their land leases by the year 2000, according to the Agricultural Landlord and Tenant Act, passed in 1967, that legislates terms and conditions of tenancy agreements.

The importance of the sugar cane industry in Fiji economy, the need to secure land leases and the turbulent history of a sugar industry riddled with ethnic politics also play a critical role in building peace within and between communities. The stability of sugar production depends largely on amicable resolution of the question of renewal of the leases.

Polarisation on this very important issue for Fiji economy could once again create enormous tensions, but fortunately there is a convergence among political leaders on the success of the process adopted for constitutional review and that, perhaps, a similar mode can be used in solving the question of renewal of leases.

Faith and culture: building bridges for understanding

When the military coup took place in Fiji in 1987, church leaders issued a statement calling on people of all faiths to pray for the good of Fiji and to meet together to find ways of increasing such prayer and understanding. Four months later, a group of Hindus, Muslims and Christians started to meet informally to pray and to respond to needs and issues as they arose. Their meetings took place on the premises of a different religious organisation, and the discussions allowed the participants to discern together how the spiritual resources of each religious tradition could be best used for the healing of ethnic relations in the country.

These meetings gave birth to Interfaith Search, following the model of the Multifaith Centre in Birmingham, England. Ten religious organisations became members, and decided that their central aim would be "to search for ways of building bridges of respect and understanding between people of different religious traditions".

This aim led Interfaith Search to work during all these years to create an environment where suspicion could be diminished and confidence and respect built between people of different religious traditions. It also enabled members of each group to grow in understanding of their own faith through interaction with people of other faiths, and to learn from them and thus diminish misunderstanding and prejudice and increase trust.

Interfaith Search submitted a paper to the Constitution Review Commission to ensure that the multi-religious character of Fijian society would be respected in the new constitution. At present this organisation has 16 members and its actions are very much appreciated. Seminars, panel discussions, talks to specific groups on intereligious dialogue are key to their work, together with prayer gatherings to celebrate special events.

In 1990, the Columban Fathers started a two-week intercultural course aimed at promoting better community relations in Fiji. This course was the start of People for Intercultural Awareness (PIA), an organisation that enhances dialogue and promotes tolerance and mutual understanding among the different cultures present in Fiji. PIA organises intercultural workshops and seminars and promotes intercultural understanding in schools and educational institutions. It also facilitates intercultural dynamics in multi-ethnic organisations or groups.

The members of PIA believe that helping train officers and key educators to experience and learn processes for intercultural understanding can be an important contribution towards ethnic cooperation. PIA expects that after attending the courses, these key people can integrate their learning into their regular educational work.

When joining the Peace to the City Campaign, these organisations plan to share their experience on negotiations over power-sharing and the building of a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural sustainable society in Fiji.

Kemuni na Kalou,
au vakavinavinakataka na yalo ni veikauwaitaki
ka sobuti keimami na lewe i Viti kei ira na neimami iliuliu
vakapolitiki ena neimami saga me vakadeitaki ena Yavu ni
Vakavulewa kei na veigaoagaca ni matanitu na bula
veicurumaki vakamatatamata kei na duidui vakabauta me rawa
ni sautu kina na neimami bula veimaliwai ena neimami vanua.

Kemuni na Daunivuku o ni sa kila oti tu ni na qai cava vinaka
ga na sasaga oqo ke keimami muria na nomuni vunau me
keimami veilomani.

Au vakacaucautaki kemuni ena nomuni sega ni laivi keimami
kei na nomuni dei tu moni neimami nuinui ena veigauna, ka'u
masuti kemuni mo ni tuberi keimami me keimami muria na sala
ni veilomani.

Emeni

O Lord, I thank you for the caring spirit that infused the people of Fiji and our political leaders in our endeavour to base our constitution and principles of governance on multi-racialism and a nation of diverse religions so that we may have peaceful co-existence in pluralism in this human community.

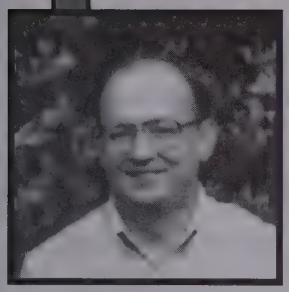
O Wise One, you know that this will only be successfully accomplished if we follow your teaching to love one another.

I praise you for never deserting us and for always being there as our hope at all times and beseech you to lead us in the path of love.

Amen

Local Coordinators

Peace to the City Campaign



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Amelia Rokotuivana

POV & Peace to the City Resources

•A dynamic and interactive **World-Wide Web** site is being used for the Programme to Overcome Violence and the Peace to the City Campaign as an innovative approach to sharing information and ideas around the world and expanding partnerships in peace and justice efforts. The site includes space for individuals and groups to add their own current efforts at peace building, make proposals for actions, and connect with others doing similar work. A researchers' network and links to other sites assists in collecting data and sharing information. Each of the initiatives in the seven cities has a web page so that individuals and groups can directly connect with their Campaign through a "sister city" arrangement. **The Web page** for the POV and Peace to the City Campaign is found on http://www.wcc-coe.org/pov.

• People with **e-mail** access can sign on to the POV listserver for updates on the POV and the Campaign and information about peace-related resources. Send a message to <majordomo@info.wcc-coe.org> with <subscribe pov-1> in the message body.

• **Monthly bulletins** are prepared by the local initiatives in each of the cities, providing stories from current projects and updating issues they are addressing. These bulletins provide the basis for a **quarterly newsletter** from the WCC office to provide an update on the Campaign. The monthly bulletins and the newsletter are available through the Web site and the POV listserver. The newsletter is also available in print.

• **A booklet** containing background information on the POV, including an update and a summary of the Peace to the City Campaign, is available in English, French, German and Spanish.

• **A leaflet on the Peace to the City Campaign**, also in the above languages, provides concrete suggestions for people outside the symbolic cities to become involved in the Campaign.

• **Videos from each of the seven cities** on their creative initiatives to overcome violence, plus a 10-15 minute video overview of the Peace to the City Campaign, will be prepared in time for the WCC Assembly.

• **Video from the Launch of the Peace to the City Campaign**. 10 minutes. Available in PAL or NTSC. To order, contact the WCC POV office in Geneva.

• **Overcome Violence T-shirts**. 15 Swiss francs plus postage. To order, contact the WCC POV office in Geneva. In the US, contact the WCC US Office at Tel: 1-212-870 3193 or fax: 1-212-870 2528.

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The focal point of the life of the Wor Council of Churches (WCC) is i Assembly held once every seve years. This is the Jubilee year for th WCC and its Eighth Assembly wi convene at the University Zimbabwe, in Harare, from 3-1 December. Up to 4,000 people fro around the world will attend what both the highest governing body the WCC, and is intended to be a gre celebration of the Christian faith Many of those who have come to previous WCC Assembly have found a life-changing event. Nowhere else i the world does there exist such a gath ering which brings togethe Christians from so many countrie traditions and cultures.

The Assembly theme is ***Turn t God - Rejoice in Hope***. With the 50t anniversary of the WCC in mind, ther will also be an underlying motif ***Jubilee***, particularly as proclaime and understood in the Bible.

Celebrations to mark the WCC 50th birthday will begin with a specia service on 20 September, i Amsterdam, where the WCC held it founding Assembly in 1948. Member of the WCC Executive Committee wi meet there in the days leading up t anniversary date and attend Thanksgiving service which is bein organised by the Council of Churche in the Netherlands. Other services Thanksgiving will be held, on th same day, by member churche around the world. All these celebra tions will climax at the Assembly o Sunday, 13 December with a publi meeting, followed by an Assembly se vice of Thanksgiving for the WCC, in cluding acts of recommitment to th WCC and the ecumenical movemen as a whole.

A new element at the Assembly wi be the ***Padare***. Padare is a Shona wor meaning ***Meeting Place***, a place of en counter and exchange. Pas Assemblies have been entirely organ ised from the planning of the WC itself. The Padare is an open plac made up of "offerings" from membe churches, church groups, ecumenica partners and those whose work influ ences or reflects WCC concerns. It i

WCC Eighth Assembly; 50th Anniversary year; Decade Festival

an opportunity to bring new ideas, to share concerns and to experience what it means to belong to the ecumenical movement. Around 200 Padare offerings are expected and they will take many forms — music, drama, dance, exhibitions, workshops, discussions, presentations, market stalls, etc. The Padare will be the place to expect the unexpected.

WCC Assemblies usually make statements on matters of contemporary importance. It is difficult to predict what areas such statements may cover though it is expected that, with the Assembly meeting being within the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a statement updating ecumenical policy on human rights will be proposed.

Assembly delegates will elect a new Central Committee which will be responsible for overseeing the work of the WCC until the next Assembly. The new Central Committee will meet briefly at the end of the Assembly to elect its officers and set a date for a first full meeting.

The decade Festival

Immediately prior to the Assembly, there will be a Decade Festival, also in Harare, but on a different site, from 27-30 November. Around 1,200 people — mostly women but also some men — will celebrate the culmination of the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women and plan for the future. The Decade has been a priority for the WCC and member churches over the last ten years, during which much has been learned which has serious implications for the life of the churches.

This Festival will celebrate all that women contribute to the life of the churches and society and will reflect on how far churches have come in their solidarity with women during the decade. The Festival will also challenge churches and the WCC to continue to act in solidarity with women. It is expected that an agenda for action — "Women's Challenges into the 21st century" — will be approved by the Festival for presentation to the Assembly itself.

Already the Ecumenical Decade has exposed at least four major areas of concern in the lives of women: ***Violence against women; Economic justice; Racism; Participation in the life of the church***. The Festival Programme is built around these concerns. There will also be a ***hearing on violence against women in the church***, including testimonies from survivors of violence. This hearing will provide space to the survivors of violence, and also give a 'judgement', challenge and call to conversion to the churches. The hearing will receive evidence on what churches and women have done to deal with violence.

Youth Pre-Assembly Meeting

This will assemble all the official delegates who are youth, the stewards at the Assembly and youth advisors. Over 100 Zimbabwean young people will join the meeting for the first day. The total participation will be over 400 people from 79 countries. On their agenda are orientation sessions on how to work more effectively within the Assembly itself; a critical review of the place given to youth within the ecumenical movement and leadership; and celebration of culture and fun.

Padare and the Peace to the City Campaign

Among the many events and issues being presented through the Padare will be initiatives involved in the Peace to the City Campaign. The seven city network will be present to share information and tools from their local efforts, as well as overall reflection on the lessons and implications for the future from the Campaign as a whole. Other peace and justice-related groups will share their work and hope with the WCC member churches.

ON THE BRINK OF WAR

This interview was recorded a few days after military action against Iraq was avoided by the UN secretary-general's agreement with president Hussein. ECHOES team person, Bob Scott, talks with Salpy Eskidjian, POV coordinator, who had just returned from a visit to Iraq as a member of a WCC team and Sam Kobia, Unit III director.

ECHOES: ***The WCC has a long commitment to the struggle against violence, which has reached its peak in the establishment of the Programme to Overcome Violence, now a leading WCC programme. Yet even as this programme has developed, there has been a major issue of violence, of war, facing us — the confrontation between the Western powers and Iraq. How do you see these connections?***

Sam: The Programme to Overcome Violence was born out of a deep concern about a real situation on the ground. At the time of the WCC Central Committee meeting in South Africa in January 1994, violence had engulfed the cities of that country, resulting in deaths of many people each passing day. Today, if you look at what is happening in Iraq, children are dying from malnutrition because of economic sanctions; many young people do not have the possibility of realising full their potential, and that means their rights as young people are being violated.

Are sanctions really a non-violent way of resolving conflict?

Clearly the sanctions have been orchestrated by the West, and, as we can now see, sanctions kill children first and foremost. If the bombs were to be dropped on Iraq, they would kill people. The Western way to solve a problem is therefore seen as leading to the deaths of people. If these decisions have been arrived at because of the interests of Western powers, then one could say this is a West versus East conflict, because the latter might have wanted to resolve the conflict differently. United States of America President Clinton and Madame Albright have said that the national interests of the United States come first, and if they feel these national interests are threatened, they might even take the unilateral decision to bomb Iraq. That is their culture; their way of looking at life, and it almost happened to Iraq if the UN secretary general had not intervened.

Salpy: There is a point I wish to make on how this relates to the Programme to Overcome Violence. One of the first things we did was to undertake a study on the applicability and effectiveness of sanctions. Based on that the WCC Central Committee adopted a policy for action. But it is very different when you have everything theoretically approved and adopted on paper from when you go to a real situation. Then the effect and effectiveness of sanctions gets a different dimension.

Are sanctions really a non-violent way of resolving conflict? What is the role of the churches in all this? The real challenge to the Programme to Overcome Violence, and the WCC as a whole, is to look at our role in evolving violent conflicts.

ECHOES: ***Salpy, you were a member of the recent WCC team visit to Iraq. What are the main things etched on your mind from that visit?***

Salpy: One thing was the way people were feeling about the whole political situation; how they feel left out right now by the international community. Of course the suffering of people cannot be denied; the visits we made to hospitals and schools and the voices of the women and children were not orchestrated for us; they were very real. The team felt we had a huge burden on our shoulders; that we were not merely engaged in a "clinical" way of visiting and talking about suffering. The people of Iraq made a plea to us, and we had to see what we could do.

Another thing that struck me was how much we have been affected by the Western media, no matter how much we read the alternative press, no matter how much we are connected to what we hear from our churches. We have to ask ourselves how free the press is. The things we were able to see in Iraq are the very things the media are also able to see — but we do not seem to hear about them in the media. Once again, we realised how powerful it is to actually visit and talk to people and to see things firsthand.

What struck me was how loud our silence has been. Where are our churches both from the region and abroad?

The UN officials also spoke very passionately to us. They were not Iraqis. One could say they're simply bureaucrats doing their job for the UN, but they did not act as such. They spoke very passionately about the unfairness of the sanctions regime and how it was being implemented. This was almost exactly the same as we heard from local and government officials.

Last, but not least, what struck me was how loud our silence has been. Where are our churches both from the region and abroad? Yes, we have been very active as an ecumenical family in giving aid to the victims of the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq. But Iraq is a very rich country which does not need that kind of aid under normal circumstances. What we give, though it is extremely appreciated, only covers a minute fraction of the immense needs. Yet for seven years the WCC has not sent an official delegation to listen and to be in solidarity, even with the

from left to right: Ms Salpy Eskidjian, Rev. Dr. Sam Kobia and Rev. Bob Scott

almost 3% of the population who are Christian. Yet they have repeatedly pleaded for our support, not just financially, but for our solidarity and for us to be there with them.

I remember a meeting we had in the autonomous region in the North at the Syrian Orthodox Church where we met with a group of young women and men. I was expecting a group of only 10 or 15, but instead, there were over 200 who had come merely to talk with us. The clarity of the way they addressed us and their political analysis was impressive. They addressed the double standards with which the US, in the name of the UN, is dealing with the situation in Iraq and how deserted they feel. They wanted to know why it took us so long to visit them. They asked, where are the young people? Young people can be connected.

ECHOES: ***I heard a TV commentator refer to President Hussein as merely 'Saddam. And I wondered if they would ever think of calling President Clinton merely 'Bill' in a news bulletin.***

Sam: No they would not. I was also struck by that. If they were talking about the president of the US they would say Mr Clinton, or in other circumstances, 'Your Excellency'. I think it is important for us to be sensitive to the way we relate to others, using the same standards of respect. It is rather demeaning of those people, whether they are journalists or high-ranking officials, to call him merely 'Saddam'. Even the US leaders speak only of 'Saddam'. I think that underneath this is a subtle racism which belittles the people of those countries or cultures they think are not very important or significant.

ECHOES: ***But both President Clinton and Prime Minister Blair have said they have a strong commitment to the people of Iraq.***

Sam: I even heard them say they are more concerned about the lives of the people of Iraq than President Hussein himself. I thought that very funny. I do not think for a moment that President Clinton or Prime Minister Blair love the children of Iraq more than the Iraqis themselves. To me that was just a political ploy on their part to justify the violence they were about to send on the people of Iraq.

ECHOES: ***We seem to have got to a point, especially in the present crisis since February of this year, where the blame for any damage that might occur is put on the bombs themselves. We have heard leaders of the West hope the bombs will do little damage — as if the bombs were somehow disconnected from those who sent them. Salpy, you visited with people who will receive those bombs, if it ever came to that point.***

Underneath this is a subtle racism which belittles the people of those countries or cultures they think are not very important or significant

Salpy: We visited the al-Amariyya shelter in which women and children had sought shelter during the 1991 bombing. If you remember, the Americans were saying at that time that there were zero deaths, or very few deaths; that always the targets were very precise and they were only military targets. But that was not the case. We visited a woman who had been there with her children — because it was the very best shelter. She left her four children there with her sister and, for some reason she couldn't really explain, decided to go back home quickly to do the laundry and come back. She could not even remember what made her decide to do that. And, of course, when she came back the shelter had been destroyed and everyone in it.

Our duty now is to say that these are not "faceless objects", they are real people. It is very difficult to hear those advocating military intervention saying that this will again be a zero death process; of course, zero death means zero American lives, not Iraqi lives, or to hear governments say they have done everything they can do and now they need to provide gas masks for people in Tel Aviv, as if there are no people in Baghdad who require them. I'm astonished. Aren't we all human, created in the image of God?

At least we need to recognise that seven years have passed and Iraq has complied with most of the points of the UN Security Council resolutions. Full compliance with UN resolutions is necessary, but that does not mean there can be no change in the present sanctions regime which has a punitive character.

We have to change the methodology of how we account for these things. We need to engage in dialogue. We need to find more peaceful measures and not use methods which lead only to ultimatums and punishments.

ECHOES: ***Sam, are you critical of the member churches of the WCC for what Salpy has described as, a 'loud silence'?***

Sam: Yes, obviously I am critical of the churches. The VIIth assembly of the WCC in Canberra, which was during the Gulf War, passed a very strong statement about Iraq. But it was not followed up. I think it was big mistake that the delegates went back to their own countries and forgot about it. They did not realise it was a situation which, because of the devastation caused by that war, needed our continued concern. The people in

Iraq needed our solidarity. We needed to continue to be concerned not only when the bombs were dropping but also with the effects of the bombs. I think that was a mistake on the part of the churches not to have found ways of expressing solidarity with the suffering masses of Iraq.

ECHOES: ***The Central Committee of the WCC adopted a paper setting out guidelines for the imposition of sanctions. That is an action which not unrelated to the Iraqi situation.***

Sam: That is true. But I think we should ask what we did with that resolution on paper? How did we incarnate it into the real lives of people? I think this is where the spirit and letter should be translated into real actions. I think this is what the churches of Iraq wanted. The fact that they are small, and the dominant church is the Roman Catholic, which is not a member of the WCC, should not prevent us from answering their call and going beyond these paper actions.

Salpy: One of the things which is a challenge for us is when the churches say it is OK to act militarily. When Christians legitimize violence and war, what does that mean? This debate has to continue, and somehow we have to open up that Pandora's box. We need to talk about what we mean by just war principles. What are the resources and principles which drive us to try to transform conflicts non-violently?

Another challenge is related to the Peace to the City campaign, where the emphasis is on highlighting local peace-building initiatives; to be the flashlight in the darkness. To support those who are saying that, in the face of violence, there is still hope and we can do something once we put our faith into action. What we experienced since the trip, which gave me personal strength, were those voices. While many of us have been silent, those voices from the grassroots were speaking out, including from the US; in hunger strikes, speaking to their senators, in vigils and constant prayers. The churches in Iraq kept saying to us: "Pray for us; tell us that you are with us; we need to know you are in solidarity with us; call for the lifting of sanctions. We don't need much more."

I was very much encouraged when the UN secretary general, Dr Kofi Annan remarked, during his press conference with Iraq Deputy Prime Minister, Tariq Aziz, that he was very thankful for all the people who had prayed for a diplomatic solution; that no one can underestimate the power of prayer. I think that is also very relevant to the Peace to the City campaign.

When Christians legitimize violence and war, what does that mean? This debate has to continue, and somehow we have to open up that Pandora's box

I want to stress that one of the methodologies of the Peace to the City campaign is that it is not only us who are Christian who have responsibility for this. In the case of Iraq, the ecumenical humanitarian aid which has gone there and the work being done is very much connected to the community at large — the Muslim community. It is very important that we show this is Christian and Muslim working together.

Sam: One thing that has left me almost breathless is a comment I heard on CNN by the US military spokesperson in the Gulf, who expressed deep disappointment that they are not going to use the bombs they have. This leads me to suspect that there is a great desire on the part of the US to test their latest bombs on Iraq. I heard another comment by Senator Jesse Helms, who said that the UN secretary general had no business going to Iraq to sign something on behalf of the UN members, particularly on behalf of the US, because it is the US interests that matter; what the secretary-general needed to do was simply tell the Iraqis what the US wants.

Comments like these and others from US leaders leave me with a cold spine, because it seems as if they are going to find the slightest reason to drop those bombs on Iraq. If that were the case, then one really wonders what will happen in our world where there is really only one superpower, and that superpower, the US, has no regard for others, and is only concerned about their so-called national interests.

We should remember that the US, again citing national interests, invaded Granada and Panama. The US is also the only country which stands condemned by the World Court for the "unlawful use of force". The reference here is in respect of US attacks against Nicaragua. We must ask ourselves against what principles does the US condemn and even act violently against Iraq.

The violence which goes on unnecessarily in the world is motivated by national interests or personal evil or whatever, but the victims are those little children who have nothing whatever to do with the war; it is those victims whose lives are cut short and who are not able to realise their full potential. I am afraid we might see more and more of this. But that is the pattern of war now. There was a time when the casualties of war were soldiers. Now its fewer soldiers and more civilians. That is the pattern. A good war is one in which few soldiers are killed.

PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

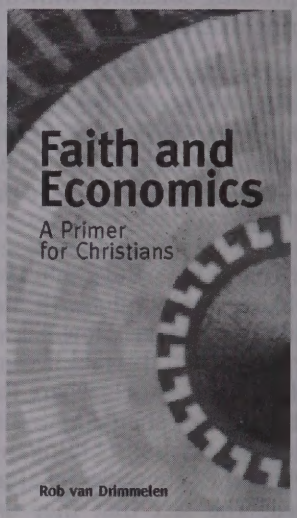
FAITH AND ECONOMICS:

A PRIMER FOR CHRISTIANS

By Rob van Drimmelen

Convinced that the Christian faith may not separate spiritual needs from material realities, numerous churches and Christian organisations have in recent years conducted studies, adopted declarations and issued pastoral messages on the relationship between faith and economic matters. Yet many Christians who are deeply committed to justice are perplexed by the complicated operations of the global economy today. This primer presents a clear introduction to the major contemporary economic issues, including globalisation, trade, international finance, unemployment, land rights and land use, and growth and its limits. A concluding chapter gives an overview of several current initiatives, some of them church-based, which offer practical alternatives that seek to overcome the injustices of the prevailing economic system.

Approx. 144pp., approx Sfr.14.95 (US$ 9.95, £6.75)
To be published April 1998
WCC Publications - P.O.Box 2100, 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland



PEACE IN TROUBLED CITIES

CREATIVE MODELS OF BUILDING COMMUNITY AMIDST VIOLENCE

By Dafne Sabanes Plou

It is in cities around the world that the destructive forces of violence in the world today are perhaps most visible. At the same time, cities are also the place where courageous groups are working imaginatively to rebuild community out of situations of alienation, violence and hopelessness. Many of these efforts are initiated and supported by churches. The World Council of Churches' "Peace to the City" campaign, inaugurated in August 1997, focuses on seven cities around the world – Belfast (Northern Ireland), Boston (USA), Colombo (Sri Lanka), Kingston (Jamaica), Durban (South Africa), Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) and Suva (Fiji) – to highlight what some local communities and action groups are doing to overcome violence there and thus stimulate people elsewhere to take similar initiatives in their own context. This book recounts stories of creative community engagement emerging from the experiences of that campaign and the WCC's Programme to Overcome Violence.

Approx. 96 pp., approx. Sfr.9.90 (US$ 6.95, £ 4.50)
To be published in September 1998
WCC Publications - P.O.Box 2100, 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland

OVERCOMING VIOLENCE

THE CHALLENGE TO THE CHURCHES IN ALL PLACES

By Margot Kässmann

The reality of violence in everyday life — in the neighbourhood, in schools and workplaces, in the home — and in many different forms — physical, verbal, psychological — profoundly challenges those who would proclaim

PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST

peace and reconciliation today. The imperative of church involvement in overcoming violence has taken on new urgency in the aftermath of the end of apartheid in South Africa, in the ongoing discussion of church involvement in peacemaking, in the ethical debate about the legitimacy of economic sanctions and in the growing recognition of the extent of violence against women and children. Against the background of the World Council of Churches' initiation of a Programme to Overcome Violence, this book looks at key biblical passages, theological issues such as reconciliation, power, witness and community, and some concrete and hopeful examples of how churches can act in response to the violence that surrounds all of them and touches the lives of their members.

Approx. 96 pp., approx Sfr.9.90 (US$ 6.95, £ 4.50).
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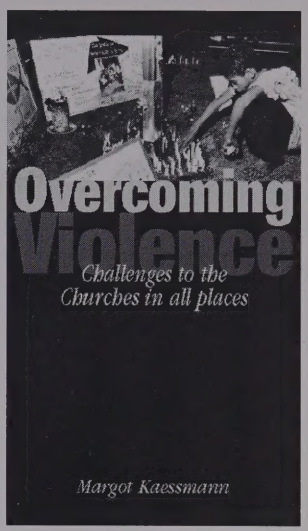

OVERCOMING VIOLENCE

LINKING LOCAL AND GLOBAL PEACEMAKING

This collection of essays reflects on the theological and practical aspects for peacemaking for the new century, including the theological implications for ecumenical dialogue. With writers and case studies from around the world and from a variety of religious traditions, the book sets the foundations for a just peace locally and globally. This book is a contribution to the POV by the Historic Peace Churches / Fellowship of Reconciliation Consultative Committee in North America, and is being published by Herald Press in time for the WCC Assembly in December 1998.

Copies of ECHOES can be ordered from the Unit III publications office at the WCC. The average cost of producing and mailing ECHOES is US$5.00 per copy (equivalent to approx. 7.- Sfr.). Readers who can afford it are strongly encouraged to contribute. However, **please note** that any contributions under Sfr20.- (US$ 15.00) actually costs more to cash than it is worth.

Individuals willing to express their commitment to the Unit III for Justice, Peace and Creation may also contribute in the same way.

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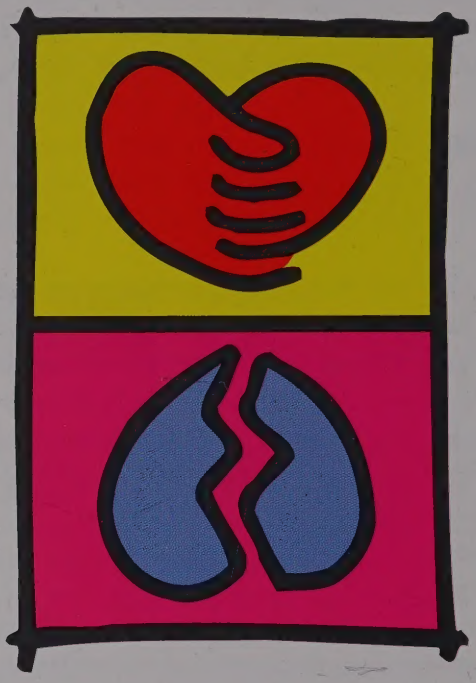

OVERCOME VIOLENCE

A PROGRAMME OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES